VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

APRIL 2012

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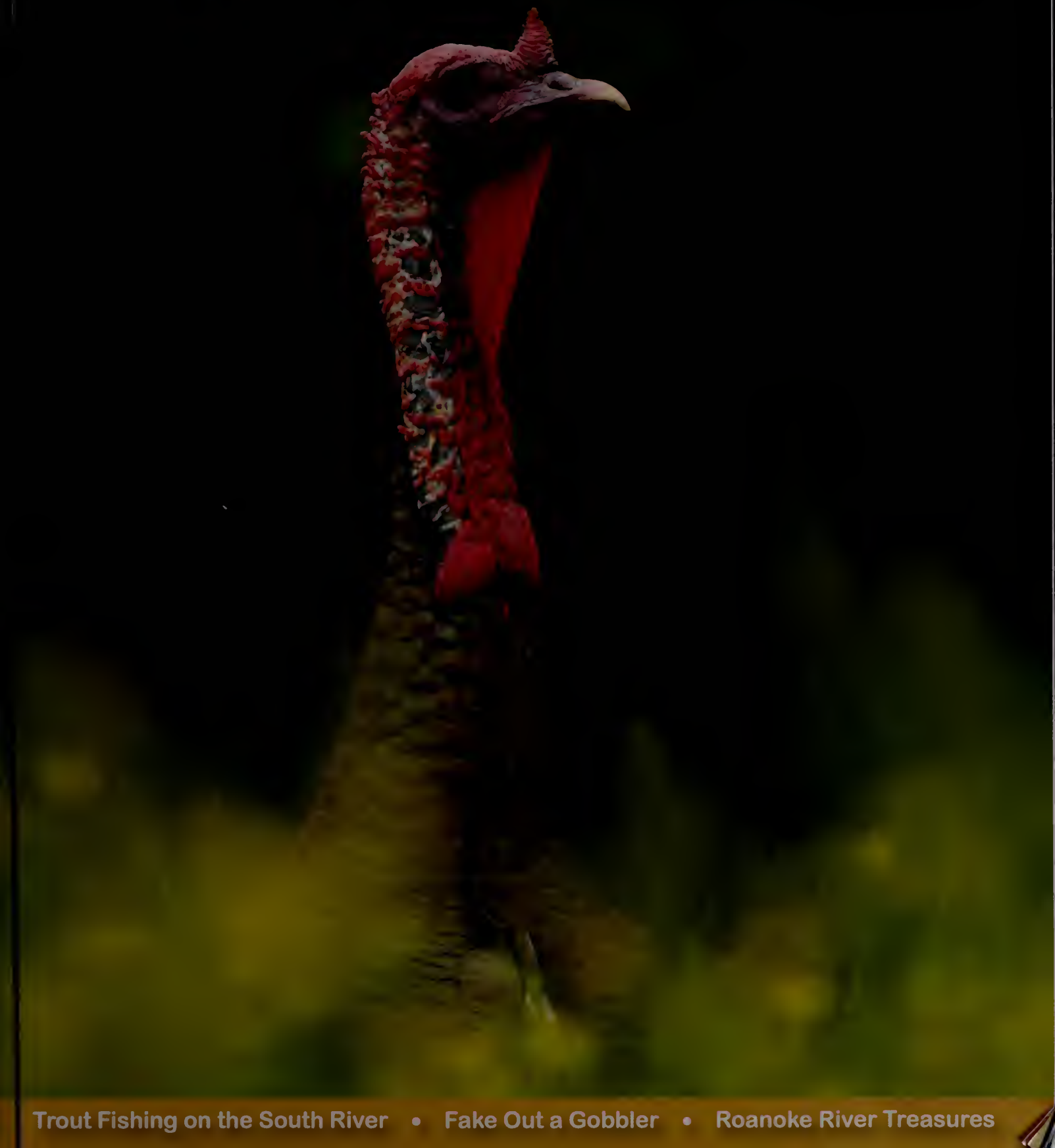

Trout Fishing on the South River • Fake Out a Gobbler • Roanoke River Treasures

APR

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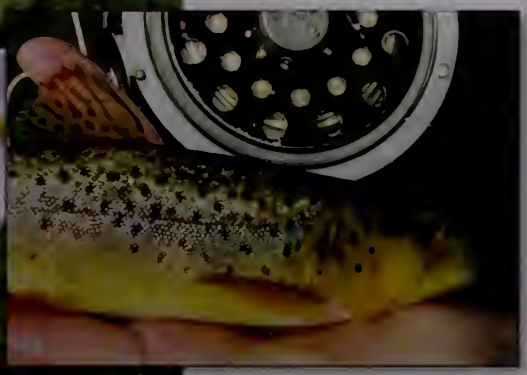

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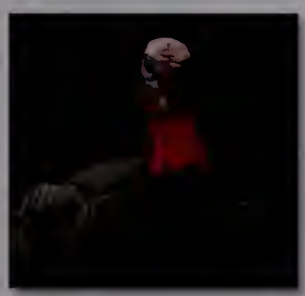

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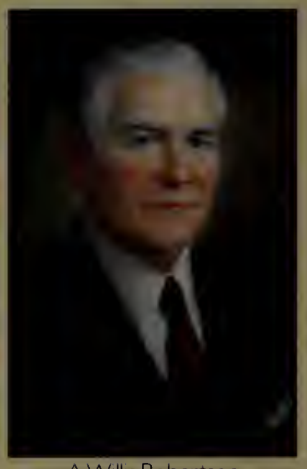

A. Willis Robertson
Director, 1926–1933

In 1937, former member of the Senate of Virginia, Representative A. Willis Robertson co-sponsored the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson Act)—a user pay, public benefit system so successful that in 1950 a companion Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act was passed as well. During this 75th anniversary year, the P-R Act remains especially meaningful to Virginia sportsmen and women and the DGIF family, since A. Willis Robertson co-sponsored in 1916 the legislation to create our agency and then served as director from 1926 until 1933.

Imagine for a moment how bleak the situation must have appeared during the late 1930s, given that species of game such as deer, turkey, bear, wood duck, and other wildlife were in short supply and revenue was extremely limited. The Department employed no wildlife or fish biologists and had no authority to set hunting and fishing seasons, as those were left to the legislature. At one point, Chairman Robertson lamented, "Frankly, I cannot point with any degree of pride to a substantial increase in either game or fish during the past five years of our administration ... (and) unless ... our commission ... develops some way of increasing the supply of wildlife ... our administration of this natural resource is going to be regarded as a failure."

I have worked for nearly forty years in the wildlife profession and virtually every aspect of what we do in this country as wildlife managers has been touched, enhanced, or even made possible by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs. These include land acquisition, habitat management, technical assistance, research and surveys, restoration programs and more!

Last December, I had the distinct pleasure of interviewing Dr. Pat Robertson, son of A. Willis Robertson, at his Virginia Beach office. When asked what his father would have thought about the fact that more than 13 billion dollars have resulted for wildlife conservation, Dr. Robertson allowed as how his father, an avid outdoorsman, would have been absolutely amazed at the success of these programs.

We are indeed indebted to Robertson and the other conservation heroes of that era, to the sporting industry who has stood fast in support of these programs, and to the sportsmen and women who have contributed so much to the most successful model of wildlife conservation on the planet. Stay tuned for a story about the history and impacts of this legislation in an upcoming issue!

We have come a long way from the "game farm" days of the early 20th century and overcome many obstacles to enjoy the abundant wildlife populations we now have. It reminds me of a quote from Chief Dan George from one of my favorite Clint Eastwood movies, "The Outlaw Josey Wales." The Chief stated that in the face of hardship he was told to "endeavor to persevere"! I think A. Willis Robertson did just that, and it is his legacy that we enjoy what we have today because of his vision and actions.

MISSION STATEMENT

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; To provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation and to work diligently to safeguard the rights of the people to hunt, fish and harvest game as provided for in the Constitution of Virginia; To promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing; To provide educational outreach programs and materials that foster an awareness of and appreciation for Virginia's fish and wildlife resources, their habitats, and hunting, fishing, and boating opportunities.

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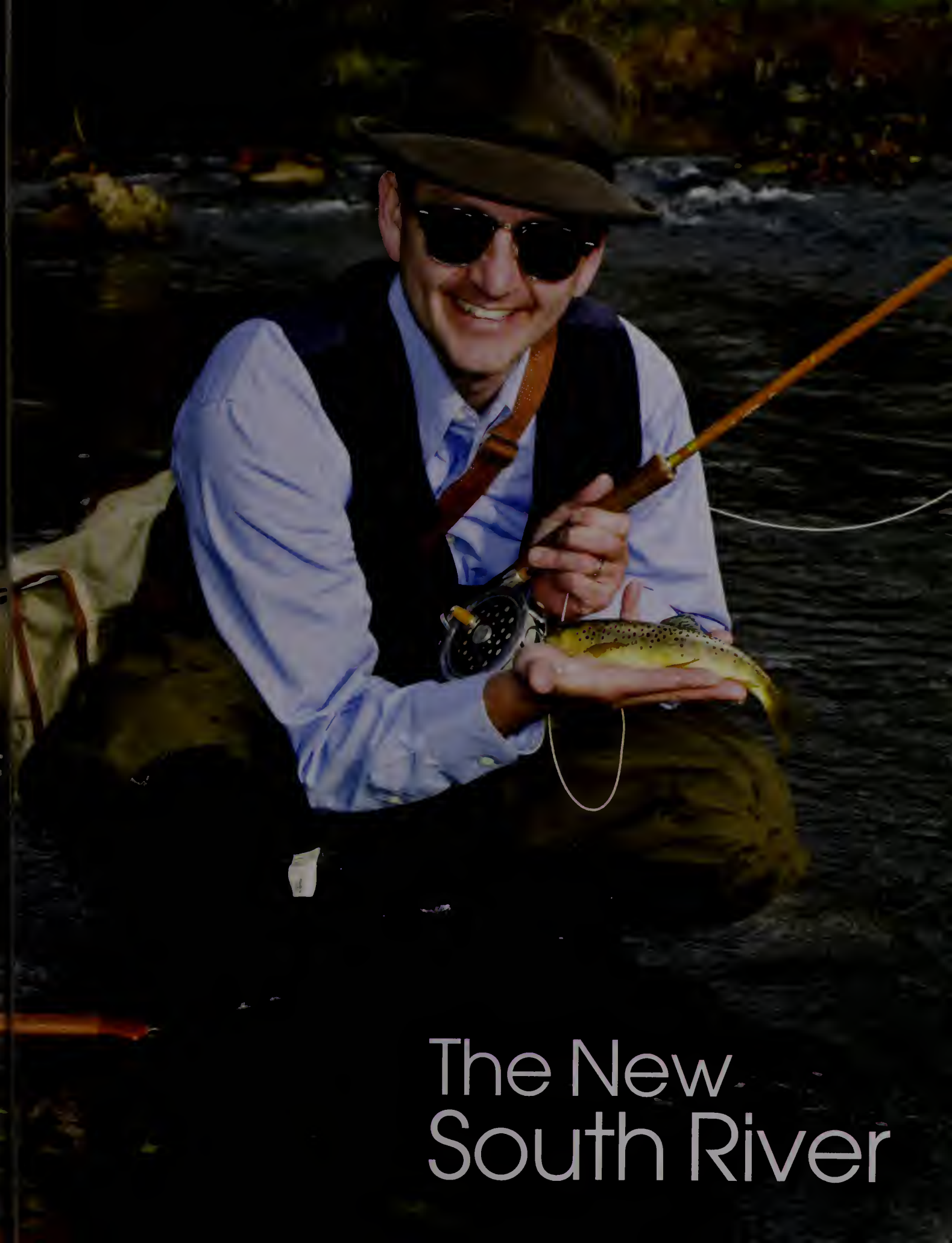
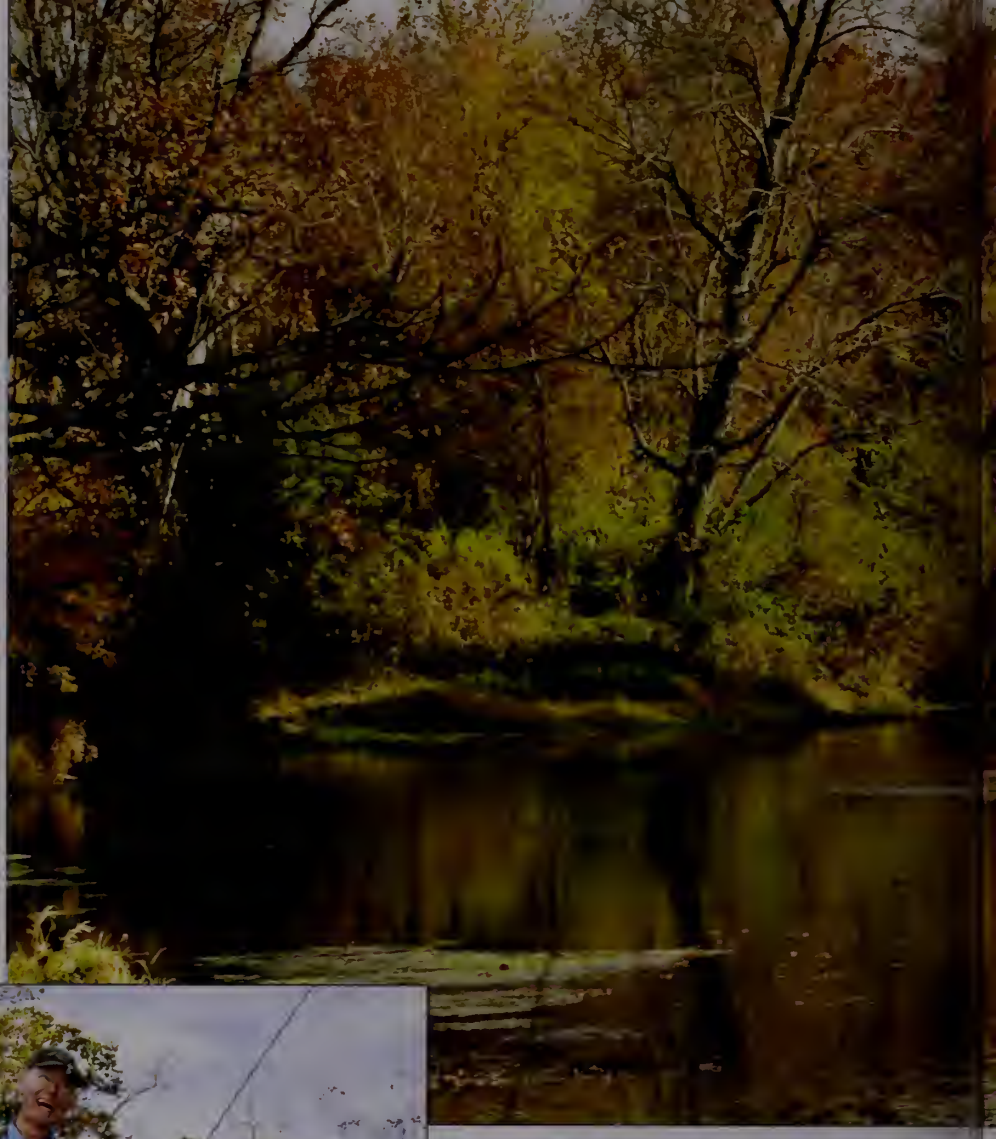


The New South River

A private-public partnership enables access to a new section of this heralded trout stream.

story by Tee Clarkson
photos by Dwight Dyke



There are some days when it is simply a crime to have to work indoors; like we have gone astray and made a terrible mistake in defining success, or value, or wealth by dollars earned or by hours logged as a cog in some droning machine. If I were in charge, no one would work in October. There would be some other months too, but I would start with October.

This was one of those October days that makes a person venture down such paths of thought, to no avail I might add other than stirring a strange feeling of nostalgia for days that never really existed in the first place.

It was still dark when I left Richmond and stayed that way west into Louisa County before I could finally see hints of the sun rising behind me. I was headed to the newly opened special regulation section of the South River. It was one of the first really cool mornings of fall, one when a few more layers are warranted but sometimes forgotten, and maybe even intentionally just so one might feel the first sting of fall in the fingers.

Harold Tate and Paul Bugas (R) look on as Tom Benzing lands a South River brown trout.

The history of this new fishery, opened to the public in January 2011, is complicated. Like any endeavor involving the setting aside of private property for public access, establishing the upper South River special regulation section took years to accomplish and many dedicated folks along the way in order to make it happen. The result: four and a half miles of beautiful trout water the public can now enjoy year round.

Many of the people instrumental in making this stretch of water a sustainable and public fishery were kind enough to meet me along the river this October morning. In fact, I was amazed at the outpouring of help and generosity I encountered in researching and putting together this article. I guess I shouldn't have been surprised after the work these folks had already put in to make this project a success for the public.

As I pulled into the parking lot, I was greeted by many of them—Trout Unlimited members, fly shop owners, Department staff, local fly fishermen. All had volunteered their time to work along the river. We stood in the lot for a while, blowing warm breath in our clasped hands and sipping the remnants of the morning's coffee, swapping fish stories, of course, and a little history of the South River.

In the mid- to late '80s the DGIF established a delayed harvest trout fishery on two miles of the South River in the city of Waynesboro. During the course of the stocking process, staff deposited some surplus brown trout in the upper segments. Reports from fishermen related that some of these trout were surviving, and not just in the cold months, but year-round. Corbin Dixon, a longtime member of Trout Unlimited, initiated contact with Waynesboro Nurseries, which owns several miles of river access along the upper South, about allowing public access for fishing. Corbin was not successful at first, but finally, in early 2008 Waynesboro Nurseries generously agreed to work with Trout Unlimited and the Department (DGIF) to establish a trophy trout program and allow public access.

The Shenandoah Chapter of Trout Unlimited, its third oldest chapter boasting some 1,200-plus members, quickly formed the South River Steering Committee, founded and headed by Urbie Nash (who also played a key role in helping create the fishery at Mossy Creek) and Harold Tate (who set up this meeting along the river today and, even more importantly, was going to take me fishing later in the afternoon). The aim of the committee was to build public and resource professional support for establishing a trophy fishery along the 4.5 miles of the Waynesboro Nurseries property. The committee included representatives from Trout Unlimited, Larry Mohn of DGIF, the state departments of Environmental Quality and Conservation and Recreation, the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation

Here, Paul Bugas poses next to the marked trail along the special regulation section of the upper South River: 2 fish per day, 16" or greater, no bait, single point hook.

BEFORE YOU GO FISHING

Free permits are required to fish the special regulation section of the South River. Permits are available at Stone Soup Bookstore and South River Fly Shop, opened by Kevin Little and Shenandoah TU Chapter President Tommy Lawhorne. Permits are also available from Dominion Outdoors in Fishersville, and will soon be available from the Department at www.HuntFishVA.com.

For more information, go to:

- www.Southriverflyshop.com
- www.dominionoutdoors.com

Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service, as well as the city of Waynesboro and Augusta County. Urbie Nash worked out the "fine print" with Waynesboro Nurseries, garnered support for the project from the city, and even helped raise money for signs and parking areas.

Aquatics Program Manager Paul Bugas, with the DGIF, brought a backpack shocker this morning so that we might take a quick sample from the river. As the group left the parking lot, a small flock of Canada geese flew low over the water, heading upstream. And while these were most certainly resident birds, their passing still indicated a shift toward fall, cooler weather, and the migrations of waterfowl. One does not notice these things from behind a desk.

Once reaching the river, it didn't take long before Paul had several beautiful brown trout, eight to ten inches in length each. These were likely fish from the most recent stocking of 10,000 fingerlings. After all of the work, these netted trout represent the hope—the future—of this fishery.

Paul is quick to point out the importance of so many organizations working together on the project. "There is no way this project could have come off the ground," he says, "if not for the partnership of TU, DGIF, Dupont, Dominion, numerous private residential landowners, and Waynesboro Nurseries working together for a common goal."

Much of the trail clearing work was performed by volunteers of TU, Shenandoah Chapter, like Richard Landreth who uses a machete to cut back overgrown vegetation.

DGIF biologist Paul Bugas samples trout and other living organisms in the river through electrofishing.

Paul's role, and the role of the DGIF, is stocking fish, monitoring their population growth, and setting regulations. As important as anything, though, their involvement provides a comfort level for landowners who allow public access to the river over private property. That is perhaps the biggest victory in this entire project and provides hope for future projects in other, no-access areas.

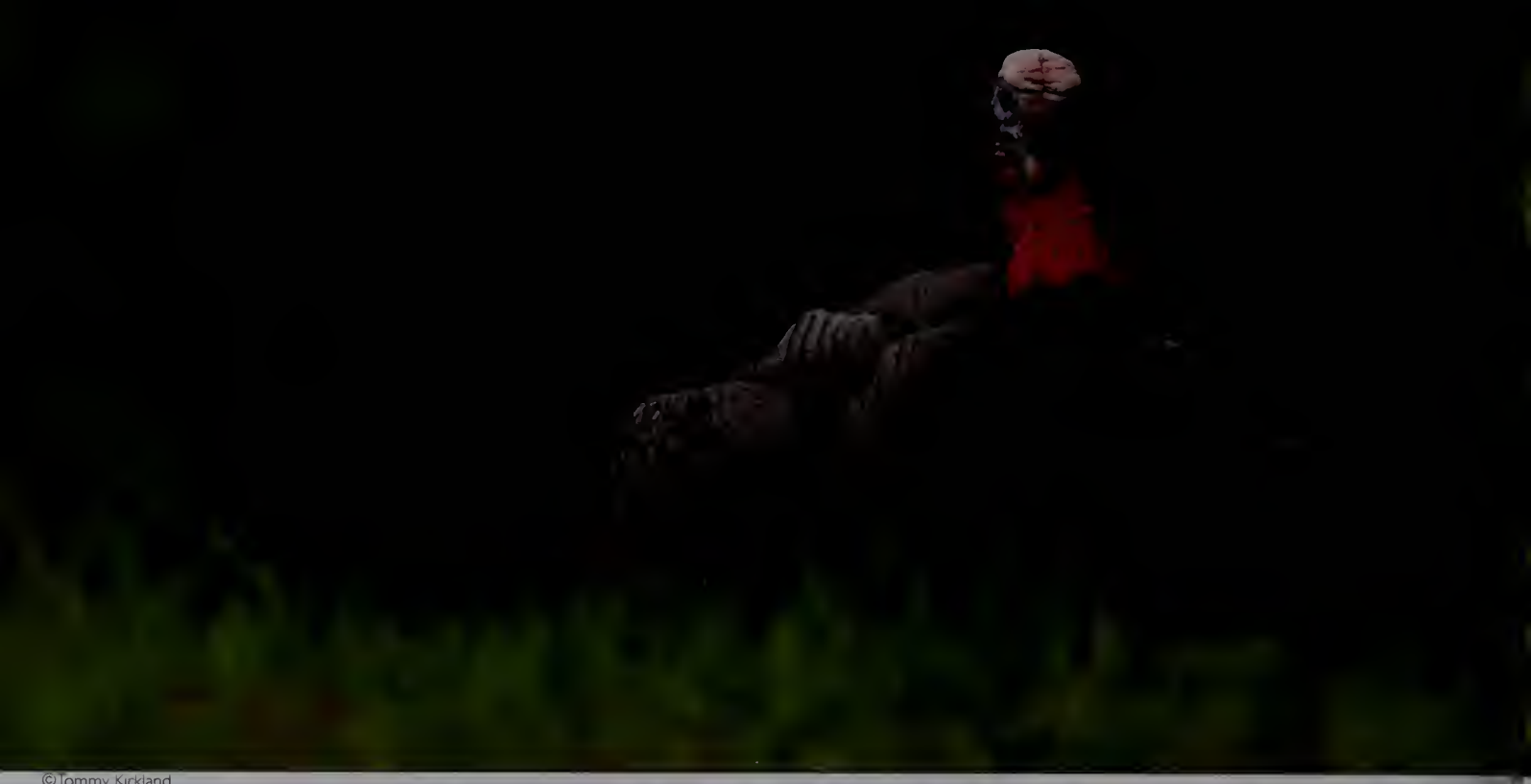
Securing public access across private property was largely the job of Harold Tate and other members of TU. They reached out to dozens and dozens of landowners and ultimately secured permission from 49 of them to allow public access along the river—the biggest by far being the Waynesboro Nurseries. This was no small task here in Virginia where public access is notoriously hard to come by, especially on trout streams.

There was one more stop for the group before Harold and I could start fishing. We headed upstream to check out what makes this fishery possible in the first place: the springs. Tom Benzing, a professor in the Department of Integrated Science and Technology at James Madison University and an avid fly fisherman and TU member, was in charge of taking the initial stream temperatures to determine if a year-round trout fishery would be sustainable on the South River. Tom established temperature sensors along the waterway and found that a multitude of springs would and did provide enough cold water, even during summer months, to allow for the survival of trout year round. This important finding gave the green light to the project. Sure enough, as we drove upstream to the far reaches of the nursery property, we saw a bubbling spring in the middle of the river, which is just one of many throughout the upper South River.

By this point it was time for lunch and gearing up for some afternoon fishing. As the rest of the group dispersed to return to other obligations, Harold and I sat on the bumpers of our cars, rigging our rods, taking an occasional bite of a sandwich, discussing fly fishing on this river and others, and generally appreciating the fine afternoon. There was no rush to get to the water. When you rush in fly fishing, bad things happen: leaders tangle, fish spook. There are plenty of situations in life that require hasty movements and thoughts, but fly fishing for trout is not one of them.

Eventually we wandered over to the river. Harold pointed me to a run he thought would have some fish in it. Sure enough, as I stood above it on a steep bank I could see dozens of trout finning in the clear water and rising occasionally to eat small mayflies from the surface. There was a time in my life when a moment like this brought great excitement, when I might slip down to the water, hastily choose a fly, and start flailing about in vain. But as cliché as it might sound, as I have gotten older I feel more of an appreciation for just being outside on a beautiful day, a fly rod in hand, looking at trout in healthy habitat. I would punch the clock for "The Man" tomorrow, and the day after, and the day after that. Today, I was here. On a crisp day in October, I would catch these fish, or not. It really didn't matter. Mostly I was thankful for the day and the people who made it possible for me to fish these waters.

Tee Clarkson is an English teacher at Deep Run High School in Henrico Co. and runs Virginia Fishing Adventures, a fishing camp for kids: tsclarkson@virginiafishingadventures.com.



©Tommy Kirkland

Fake Out A Gobbler

Increase your chance of success with a decoy.

Spring gobbler season wasn't going too well for Brian Healy, so when he finished work early one day several years ago, he wasn't sure he was going to hunt. The season was winding down and he had little to show for his efforts so far.

"I had the time and it was legal to hunt all day then, so I figured I had nothing to lose," he recalls.

Instead of walking through the woods with a box call in his hands and yelping every 100 yards or so, the 51-year-old Powhatan painter decided to try something different. He carried four turkey decoys into a field, placed them 20 yards from where he planned to sit, and settled in for a long wait. Turns out, the wait was short.

"I'd been seeing turkeys in the area on and off through the season, but I couldn't get a gobbler to come in," he says.

Healy let out a few yelps on a box call and was immediately answered by a gobbler at the far end of the field. The big tom stepped into the pasture, spotted the decoys and ran 150 yards, stopping just a few feet from them. Healy was back at his truck, bird in hand, before the engine had time to cool. He might have tagged that gobbler without the decoys, but he's not sure. However, he is certain that the decoys proved an important part of the hunt.

Turkey decoys can be that effective. In fact, Capron resident Tommy Barham remembers telling a friend about how well they work.

"He said they ought to be illegal after I told him about all the turkeys I was killing," recalls Barham.

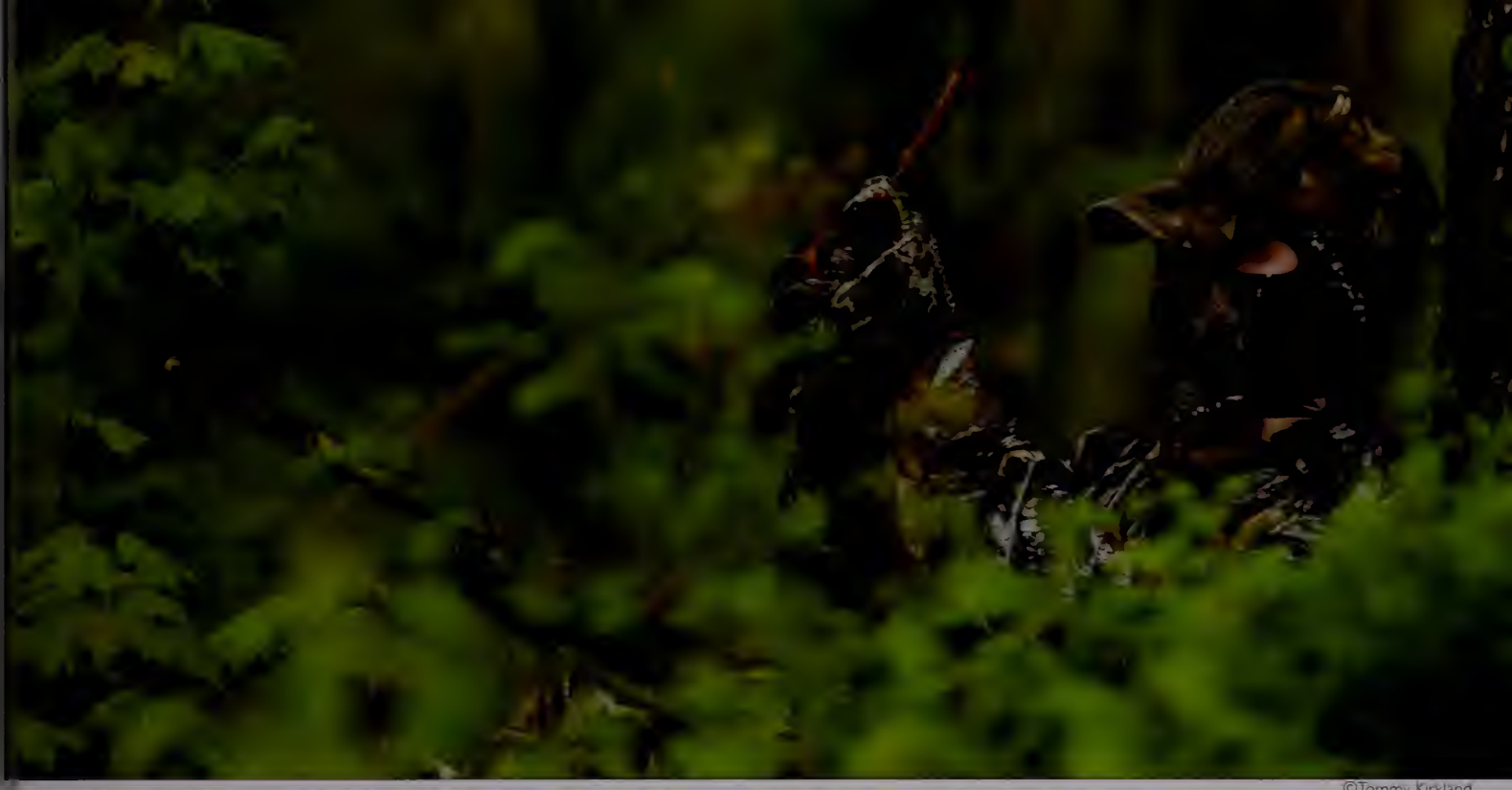
They aren't illegal, but one thing's for sure: A decoy, or several, can increase your odds of success in a sport known for soaring highs and depressing lows. Turkey hunting by itself is an addictive, thrilling pursuit. Put a gobbler on the ground and you'll feel like you climbed Mount Everest. When things go wrong, however, it can make the most dedicated spring gobbler hunter wonder why he isn't on a golf course instead of in the turkey woods.

Decoys aren't fool-proof, though. Simply sticking one in the ground in front of you isn't the ticket to a notch in your hunting license. You have to know when, where, and how to use them. As Healy learned, they can actually be a liability at times.

Fields Rule

He was hunting a large block of mature hardwoods near his home several years ago and a gobbler was answering every time Healy let out a few yelps. A jake and two hen decoys stood just 20 yards in front of him and the gobbler was closing the distance fast. That is, until it saw the decoys.

"He turned and ran like I shot at him," says Healy.



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This Spring

by David Hart

Turns out, he wasn't the only one who had the exact same experience with gobblers and decoys in deep woods. He rarely uses decoys in woods now, but when he does, Healy typically sets a single hen decoy about 15 yards to his left or right so the gobbler is focused on the hen and not on him. Barham also shuns decoys in woods, but like Healy, he almost always uses them when he's hunting a field. Neither hunter knows why they work so well in fields but not in woods, but one thing's for sure: Gobblers don't just walk to a decoy in a field; they often run to them.

"Gobblers come to decoys for two reasons," says Barham, "to breed or to fight. Gobblers establish a pecking order in the spring and a dominant bird will often come to another gobbler to establish dominance. They are very competitive and they don't like sharing their territory with another gobbler, so when they see another gobbler, they come looking for a fight."

In some cases, that can backfire. A strutting gobbler decoy can intimidate younger birds, particularly two-year-olds, which will often shy away from a mature gobbler decoy. He's seen it happen on numerous occasions, but he admits there isn't much you can do about it, at least not at that moment. When it does happen, Barham will use a jake (a juvenile male) decoy the next time because jakes are at the bottom of the pecking order. Some decoy companies sell jake decoys, but making a strutting jake decoy is as simple as taking a pair of scissors to an adult gobbler tail fan and shortening the outer primary tail feathers by an inch or so while leaving the four middle feathers full length.

©Tommy Kirkland

Calling is important with or without a decoy, but once a gobbler spots your decoy, drop the call and pick up your shotgun.

Safety First

Turkey hunting is safe. But sometimes, a thoughtless hunter will do anything to tag a gobbler, including trespassing or shooting before they identify their target. That's why Kolich always considers worst-case scenarios when he sets up his decoys. For example, when he hunts within sight of a road, he makes sure he sits off to the side of his decoys in case someone takes a pot-shot from their truck window.

"You also don't want to put them in a trail or logging road in a way that someone might take a quick shot when they come around a corner and see what they think is a gobbler," he says.

Although there is no consensus of whether or not it spooks turkeys, some hunters wrap an orange band around a tree near their location. It can serve as a warning to others in the area. Hunters should also wear blaze orange when walking to and from their calling position and when setting up or moving decoys. Never wear white, blue, or red clothing.

The Department also recommends that you choose a calling position that will provide you with a backstop as wide as your shoulders and will protect you from the top of your head down. If you suspect the presence of another hunter, call out in a loud voice and remain hidden until the other hunter acknowledges you.

Bottom line? Always assume another hunter is after the turkey you are working, even if you are the only one with permission to hunt that farm. Set your decoys in a way that you won't be in the line of fire. Of course you never know where someone else might come from, but consider trails, logging roads, and other obvious access points when you set up in a field or in the woods. Above all, don't shoot at something you haven't positively identified, even if it looks real.

©David Hart

Using four or more decoys, including a strutting gobbler, can duplicate an early season situation where gobblers travel with several hens.

Big Spreads

A jake mixed in with several hens can also pull in a jealous gobbler. Turkeys are often still traveling in groups in the early spring and it's not uncommon to see either a group of gobblers together or a gobbler with a harem of hens. That's why Bob Kolich lugs a sack of decoys through the early morning darkness in the first few weeks of the season. His spread includes three hens—a squatting hen, a feeder, and an alert hen—as well as a semi-strutting gobbler. If a single fake turkey looks convincing, says Kolich, four decoys appear four times as realistic. In fact, Healy knows some hunters who set out eight or ten at a time.

"Their philosophy is to imitate a whole flock of turkeys like you often see in the early spring. They say it works, but I don't see a need to use that many," he says. "It's a lot of work carrying that many decoys around."

Like Kolich, he prefers three or four, including a strutting gobbler and two or three hens—one of them squatting, which imitates a receptive female. He places the tom close to a squatting female as if the gobbler was preparing to mount the hen and the other two hens off to the side five yards or so. That can incite a real gobbler to challenge the fake gobbler.

"Gobblers always come to the gobbler decoy. I position the decoy so that it is sideways to me, which gives me a clear shot at the bird when he's facing the decoy," notes Kolich. "If you face the gobbler decoy directly away from you, the real gobbler will be on the other side of the decoy and you won't have a clear shot."

That's not to say you need to lug four bulky decoys to your favorite spot all season long. Both Kolich and Barham will also use a single strutting gobbler decoy as the season progresses. Because mature gobblers are often itching for a fight early in the season, they come running to that single bird to challenge him. As the season progresses, however, those older birds are more focused on breeding,

©David Hart

A red-dot-type scope can help you stay on your target, whether or not you use a decoy during the spring gobbler season.

which is why Barham will remove the gobbler decoy from his set-up and use a single Primos hen decoy instead. He says a gobbler is more willing to approach a single hen later in the season because many of the real hens are sitting on nests and are unreceptive to the advances of a male bird.

"I think they just get tired of fighting, too," he adds.

Sit, Stay, Be Quiet

How many you use is somewhat less important than how you use them or what you do when you are waiting for a bird to show up. All three men quit calling once they know a gobbler has seen their decoys. That is, unless the bird hangs up on the far edge of a large field. When that happens, Healy will call aggressively, mostly because he figures he has nothing to lose. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, but if a gobbler has seen the decoys and doesn't approach, that doesn't mean he's gone for good.

"He may be making his rounds with his hens, but once his hens either go sit on their nests or ignore him long enough, he may come looking in the field again," he notes. "I've killed many birds that came back into the field several hours later."

Barham agrees. He recalls a tom that refused to come into a field until Barham made a gobble on a shaker-type call. That challenge brought the bird into the field, but once it saw a lone jake decoy, Barham didn't make another call. He didn't need to. The gobbler ran to the decoy.

"There were two real hens in the field, so I assume that older bird saw the jake as a threat," he recalls.

The lone decoy was just 25 yards from where Barham was sitting, a good all-purpose distance. Anything closer and an approaching gobbler may see you as he's walking to the decoys. And you might miss what seems like an easy shot. Turkey chokes throw a tight pattern, so tight it's almost like shooting a rifle at anything closer than 10 or 15 yards.

"You want to let that pattern spread out a little," notes Healy.

However, placing decoys beyond 25 yards could result in a blown opportunity if a gobbler is leery of the decoys. He may hang up just out of shotgun range, costing you a rare chance at success. Of course there are no guarantees in turkey hunting, not even when you use a decoy. Using one, however, will increase your odds as long as you use it right.

David Hart is a full-time freelance writer and photographer from Rice. He is a regular contributor to numerous national hunting and fishing magazines.

©David Hart

Young hunters need to taste success early on in order to stay interested. A decoy can help increase the odds of that success.

Silver Bullets
Rebound

American shad are once again swimming the currents of the nation's river.

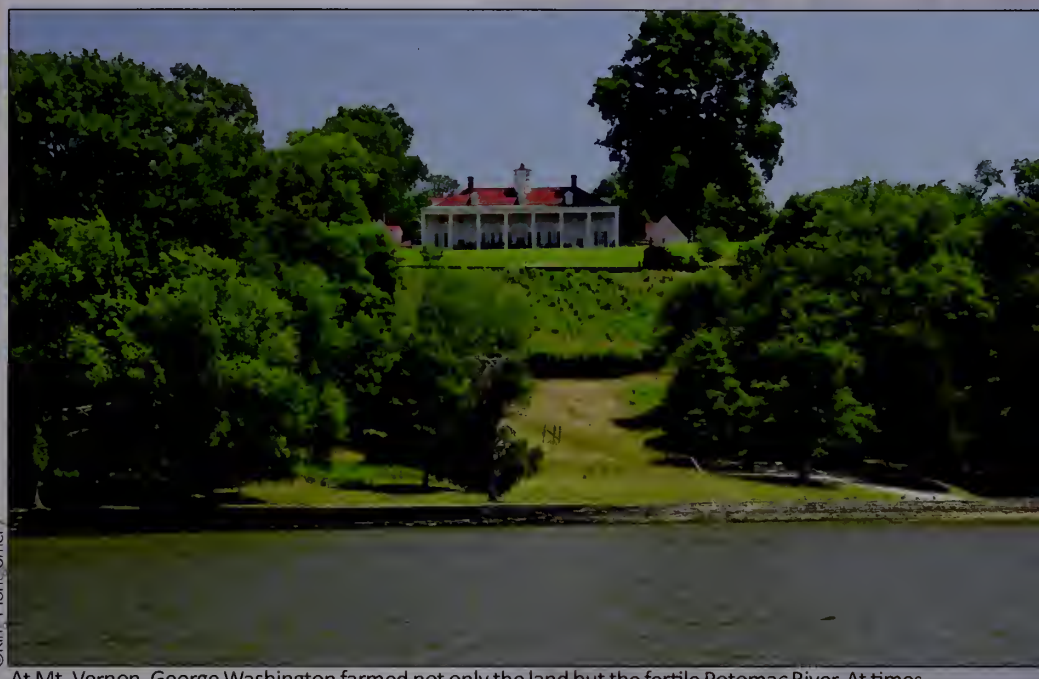
by King Montgomery

Each spring as the hickory and American shad are in the tidal Potomac River on their annual spawning migration, a member of the Northern Virginia Chapter of Trout Unlimited emails shad reports to other members who might be interested in fishing for these engaging silvery members of the herring family. Much of the fishing from the Virginia, Maryland, or Washington, D.C., shore or from a boat takes place in the vicinity of Fletcher's Boat House on the D.C. side, upstream to beyond the Chain Bridge in northern Arlington County.

The past several years have seen shad runs bring in more and more fish to the Potomac River system, and the American shad are showing numbers not seen in many decades. The good shad numbers are a direct result of a restocking program for American shad begun in 1995. The congressionally-mandated Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) led the way, with the assistance of local watermen and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)—particularly, the Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery near Charles City. Since 2003, ICPRB has worked with the Department (DGIF) to use Potomac River American shad to restock the Rappahannock River.

Since 1995, when the stocking programs began, over 21 million American shad fry have been placed in the Potomac, and more than 30 million in the Rappahannock. Currently the shad populations in both rivers have increased significantly and hopefully in time will only get better.

American shad numbers in the tidal rivers of the eastern seaboard from Nova Scotia to Florida weren't always low.



©King Montgomery

At Mt. Vernon, George Washington farmed not only the land but the fertile Potomac River. At times, fish like shad, striped bass, and sturgeon made up 40% of his annual income.

A Brief Shad History

In 1608, on a journey up the Potomac from the Chesapeake Bay, Captain John Smith wrote of seeing more fish in one place than he had ever seen before. The Indians along the river relied on fish for food and barter. When European settlers established a foothold in the New World, sturgeon were plentiful enough to support a major fishery and American shad ran up the river by the millions.

The Potomac also played largely in the early struggles of this young country, of course. In 1814, the British sailed up the river and attacked the American port city of Alexandria. Another force sailed up the Patuxent River and marched to Washington, D.C., where they wreaked havoc, including the burning of the White House. During the American Civil War, the river was a boundary between opposing armies and ways of life. In battles at Harpers Ferry, Antietam, Gettysburg, and dozens of other locations, the Potomac played a vital role as a natural obstacle or a supply line for one side or the other.

Lamenting the demise of the annual upstream spawning runs of the shad on the Concord and Merrimack rivers in New England, Henry David Thoreau wrote: "Still patiently, almost pathetically, with instinct not to be discouraged, not to be *reasoned* [Thoreau's italics] with revisiting their old haunts, as if their stern fates would relent, and still met by the Corporation with its dam. Poor shad! Where is thy redress?" A few lines later he exclaims, "Who hears the fishes when they cry?" *(A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers,* 1849*)*

Gentleman farmer George Washington had some pretty nice waterfront property at his home, Mount Vernon, and he mined the fertile Potomac River well. At times, fish from the river, particularly American shad, striped bass, and Atlantic sturgeon, made up about 40 percent of his annual income.

As agriculture and industry developed and prospered in the fertile Potomac plain, by-products of our ignorance and unconcern turned the river into a foul-smelling, seemingly stagnant, almost lifeless body of water. Add severe overfishing by commercial interests for centuries, and by 1960 the river was virtually dead. The Clean Water Act of 1972 and subsequent laws established a long-term plan and funds for cleaning up and maintaining the Potomac. Fortunately, by the 1980s the river was on its way to ecological recovery, and has become one the best tidal largemouth bass fishing rivers in the country.

©King Montgomery

Waterman and river advocate, the late Louis Harley helped fisheries biologists by collecting American shad for propagation efforts.

After several more sets we had enough buck and roe shad, and it was time to rendezvous with DGIF fisheries biologists who were waiting for us on a rocky stretch of the shoreline of Fort Belvoir. The biologists stripped eggs from the female shad and milt from the males to fertilize the eggs, and prepared the mixture for shipment to the King & Queen Fish Hatchery in Stevensville.

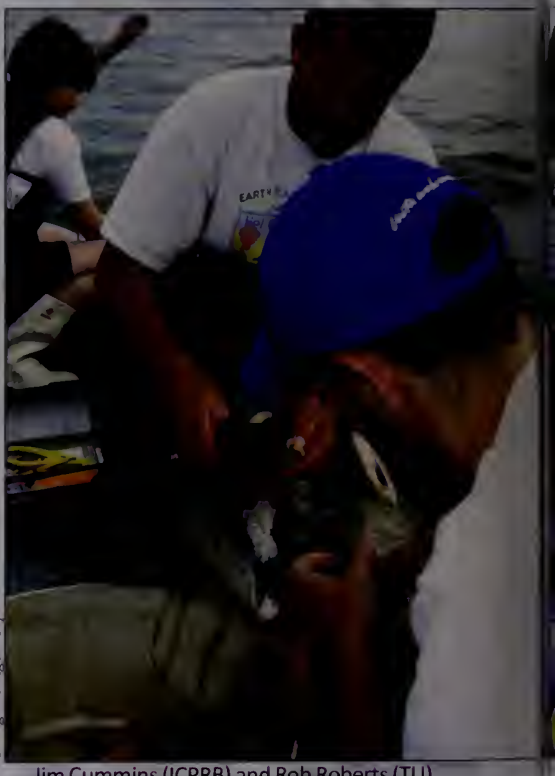
Those fertilized Potomac eggs yielded millions of shad over the nine years of the restocking program, and the fry have been planted in the Rappahannock River, the Potomac River, and the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. As part of the Potomac program, some of the eggs went to school children in the greater Washington Metropolitan Area, comprising VA, MD, and D.C.

Over the years more than 200,000 young students have participated in raising shad from eggs, then releasing them into the Potomac. This "Schools in Schools" program is a partnership with Living Classrooms of the National Capital Region and the Anacostia Watershed Society, and has also involved the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Potomac Conservancy. To date, the children

The Last Waterman

Louis Harley plied the Potomac River from his home on Northern Virginia's Mason Neck for well over a half-century. He netted any fish that was legal to commercial take and sold it on the market. As he entered his twilight years, Harley began to give back to the river by collecting American shad during the spring runs to help reinvigorate that ever-declining population. In 2004 I joined Harley in his old, well-used but seaworthy boat to gather some shad for wonderful purposes.

ICPRB's Director for Living Resources, Jim Cummins, his young son Dirick, and volunteer Rob Roberts from Trout Unlimited's headquarters in Arlington, all helped feed out the long gill net over the stern of the boat. Soon we could see the numerous bright orange floats drifting with the tide. Harley repositioned the boat and the net was hauled in by hand. Squirming silvery American shad, dozens of them, were disentangled and put into a large holding tank that took up much of the room on the boat.



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Jim Cummins (ICPRB) and Rob Roberts (TU), front, help retrieve the long gill net and disentangle shad for egg and milt collection.

SOME SHAD INFORMATION

The Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin: www.potomacriver.org
Click on "Projects" and select American Shad Restoration Project.

Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries: www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/shad-restoration/

Living Classrooms of the National Capital Region: www.livingclassroomsdc.org

Let the River Run Silver Again: How One School Helped Return the American Shad to the Potomac River—and How You Too Can Help Restore Our Living Waters by Sandy Burk, www.mwpubco.com/authors/burk.html.

Shad Fishing by C. Boyd Pfeiffer (2002). The best book on sportfishing for shad. www.amazon.com and other online book stores.

have returned over 300,000 shad fry to the river.

A delightful book by Sandy Burke chronicles the shad restoration program in one of the schools that participated in the program. *Let the River Run Silver Again* is available through the ICPRB website.

Now & the Future

The Potomac River American shad population continues to grow and the trend remains strong, both in the number of returning adult spawners as well as the number of juvenile shad produced in the Potomac. The 2000 placement of a fish ladder by the Army Corps of Engineers on the Brookmont Dam at Little Falls allows anadromous fishes access to traditional spawning grounds all the way upriver to the natural barrier of Great Falls. And improvements in the water quality up and down river help to improve the medium in which all fishes live. More needs to be done.

Shad stocks are not quite up to catch and keep sportfishing yet—the river shad have been protected since 1982. If the upward trend continues in numbers, a sportfishing limit could be set; meanwhile, any American shad caught by anglers must be returned immediately to the river. A very limited number of incidentally captured shad are now allowed to be harvested by specific commercial fishing gear, so you may be buying Potomac shad in the market. Hopefully, anglers will soon be able to take one home as well, since the fish and their roe are delicious.

©Kim Montgomery

Outdoors writer Beau Beasley hefts a mature shad that hit a fly in the Potomac River near McLean, and quickly releases it.

©Dwight Dyke

Through the process of "milking," biologists collect eggs from female shad.

The ICPRB, the USFWS, the DGIF, and the MD DNR continue to monitor the progress of the shad restoration program. The ICPRB-led program now assists the Department's restoration efforts in the Rappahannock River, where DGIF has been working for years, particularly since the dam at Fredericksburg was removed in 2004.

The last Fairfax County full-time waterman, Louis Harley, passed away in 2009. He dedicated many of his final years to helping return American shad stocks to the Potomac River and to educating people about what a great fish these silvery creatures really are. His two sons, Mike and Brad, carry on that tradition as they ply the waters of the Potomac part-time with the knowledge and concern they learned from their fine father.

Migratory shad, both the hickory and even more so the American, were particularly hard hit by our abuses during the past three centuries, but now these marvelous fish are staging a come back and soon could hold their rightful place in the ecology and history of the nation's river.

I'm very grateful that people like Louis Harley and his son, Jim Cummins, at ICPRB; the men and women of the USFWS, DGIF, MD DNR, and many other fine organizations; and the hundreds of volunteers including the school children who raise and release shad answered Thoreau's question. They heard the fishes when they cried.

King Montgomery has contributed many articles and photos to Virginia Wildlife over the past two decades. He thanks Jim Cummins of ICPRB and Mike Isel of DGIF for their help with this article. Contact King at kingangler1@aol.com.

NOTE: A moratorium on river herring went into effect January 1, 2012. It is unlawful for any person to possess *any* river herring in Virginia.

Invaders in Virginia

Hydrilla, photo courtesy of Pete Huber

With a little thought and effort, we can stop them in their tracks.

by Cristina Santiestevan

From our backyards to our favorite state parks and management areas, non-native species can be found throughout Virginia. While some are relatively harmless, others present a serious threat for the people, ecosystems, and native species of the state.

What are invasive species?

Fire ants. Purple loosestrife. The fungus that causes chestnut blight. Invasive species, such as these, can be plants, animals, or pathogens. A species is considered invasive if it satisfies two conditions. First, an invasive species is an introduced species; it is not native to the area where it is considered invasive. Second, an invasive species causes ecological or economic harm to the area where it is introduced. Some invasive species also harm human health. An introduced species that does not cause significant harm is not considered invasive. For example, dandelions are an introduced species in the United States, but they are not considered an invasive species.

How do they get here?

Some invasive species get here intentionally. We plant them as ornamentals in our yards or gardens, grow them as crops for ourselves or livestock, and use them for erosion control along highways and other disturbed areas. Not all of these plants will become invasive, but many of our worst invaders are plants that were once grown by gardeners, farmers, or land managers. Released pets—fish that have grown too large for their aquarium, for example—can also become invasive if environmental conditions suit them.

Other invasive species get here accidentally. They hitch a ride in ships' ballast water, travel as stowaways in cargo or luggage, or arrive with lumber, plants, or seeds, hidden in the soil or plant material.

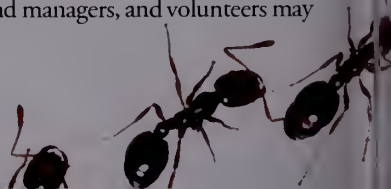
Why care?

Invasive species can wreak havoc on native species and habitats, agricultural production, human health and recreation, and much more. One 2005 study—"Update on the environmental and economic costs associated with alien-invasive species in the United States," published by Ecological Economics—puts the annual cost of invasive species in this country at $120 billion. That number has almost certainly risen since. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation estimates that invasive species cost the state approximately $1 billion every year.

But the costs of invasive species extend far beyond dollar amounts. It was an invading fungus that wiped out the American chestnut in the early 1900s. The West Nile Virus—accidentally introduced from Africa—threatens the health of both wildlife and humans. And, the brown marmorated stink bug is a recent invader from Asia, doing great harm to crops.

How do we get rid of them?

Unless they are very recent arrivals, invasive species are extremely difficult to eradicate. Many of the traits that allow them to invade new environments—adaptable, fast growing, rapid reproduction—also allow them to evade eradication. This means that most invasive species cannot be eliminated from their new range, but they can sometimes be controlled. Biologists, land managers, and volunteers may



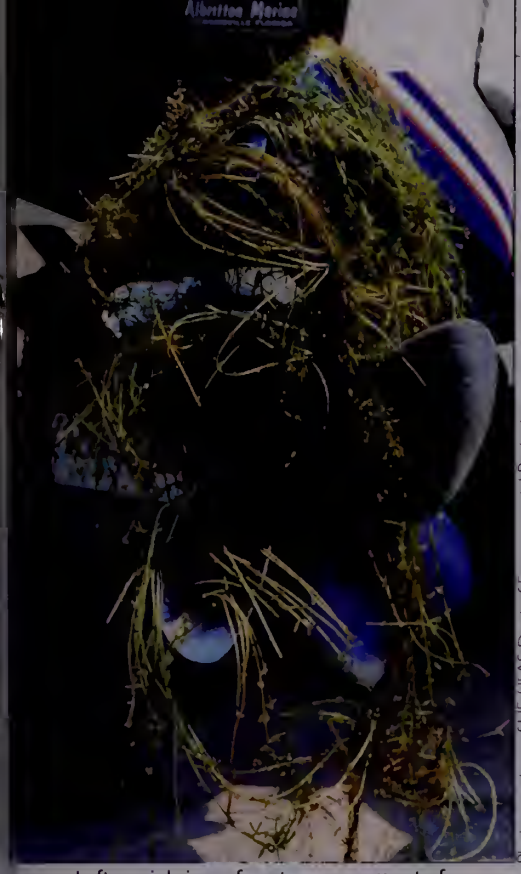


Photo courtesy of UF / IFAS Dept. of Environmental Protection

Left, aerial view of upstream segment of Claytor Lake revealing part of 226-acre hydrilla bed. Once established, hydrilla chokes out other underwater life and fouls boat props.

attempt to control invasive species by physically removing them from the environment, spraying pesticides or herbicides, modifying the habitat to better suit natives, or—rarely—releasing the natural predators of the targeted offenders.

Often, the easiest way to control invasive species is to prevent their introduction or spread in the first place.

Can I help?

Absolutely! There are many things we can all do to help prevent, eradicate, or control invasive species. For example:

- ❍ *Are you a boater, hunter, or hiker?* If so, be careful to thoroughly clean your clothing, gear, and equipment (especially boat propellers) after each outing; some invasive species are notorious for hitching rides to new habitats. Learn more: www.protectyourwaters.net.
- ❍ *Are you a gardener or landscaper?* If so, educate yourself about popular ornamental plants, and learn to identify the species and varieties that are known invaders in Virginia. Barberry, privet, and burning bush, for example, are all highly invasive. Learn more: www.epa.gov/reg3esd1/garden/invasives.htm.
- ❍ *Do you own any pets?* If so, please do not release them into the wild. Several of Virginia's worst invaders—snakehead fish, for example—became established in the state because people released their unwanted pets. Learn more: www.habitattitude.net.
- ❍ *Are you a hunter or angler?* If so, consider deliberately targeting invasive species, many of which are actually quite tasty. Snakehead fish are considered a desirable food fish in their native range (see June 2011 issue of VW). Learn more: www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/snakeheads.asp.
- ❍ *Do you ever use firewood?* If so, please be sure to only collect firewood from your immediate region. Some invasive species, including the emerald ash borer, will hitch a ride on firewood and other raw lumber products. Learn more: www.dontmovefirewood.org.
- ❍ *Are you a parent, friend, or community member?* If so, please share your knowledge about invasive species with family, friends, and neighbors. Learn more: www.invasive.org.

Fire Ants
Photo courtesy of Stephen Ausmus, USDA-ARS

Five of Virginia's Most Wanted Invaders

Red Imported Fire Ant

These tiny red-and-black ants pack a punch that seriously exceeds their size. Fire ants are fiercely protective of their colonies and will attack en-masse anything they perceive as a threat. Because fire ants prefer to build their dome-shaped homes in sunny areas, they are often found in lawns, agricultural fields, and playgrounds. Fire ants readily out-compete native ant species and pose a threat to ground-nesting animals, such as rabbits and many birds.

Where did they come from? Red imported fire ants are native to South America. They arrived in Mobile, Alabama, as stowaways on cargo ships in the 1930s.

Where are they now? Since their arrival in Alabama, fire ants have spread across much of the southeastern United States. They reached Virginia in 1989, and are now firmly established in the tidewater region. Scientists expect that fire ants will eventually reach most of Virginia.

What is Virginia doing about them? Virginia has established a Federal Fire Ant Quarantine for several counties and cities in Tidewater. This quarantine affects the shipment of goods that may facilitate the spread of fire ants within and beyond Virginia. Learn more: pubs.ext.vt.edu/444/444-284/444-284.html.

Tree-of-Heaven

Also known as ailanthus, this weedy and fast-growing tree was once a popular choice for landscapes and street plantings. Now, tree-of-heaven is recognized as an aggressive invader that readily out-competes native species. These trees release a chemical that inhibits the

Tree-of-Heaven ©Rob & Ann Simpson

Spotlight on Hydrilla

In 2003, when Bill Kittrell first confirmed the presence of hydrilla in Claytor Lake, the invasive plant covered approximately 40 of its 4,500 acres. By 2011, the weed covered 400 acres of the lake. "It's expanding fairly rapidly," confirms Kittrell, who manages aquatic resources in the southwest region for the Department. "Once you're infested with this exotic plant, it's very difficult to eradicate, if not impossible. All you can do is just try to manage it."

Claytor Lake, which lies along the New River in southwestern Virginia, is where the state is waging its fiercest fight against the invasive plant. If hydrilla escapes the lake—a popular destination for recreation and fishing—it could overtake parts of the New River, and expand its reach through Virginia and West Virginia. In an effort to prevent this, the state released 6,000 Asian grass carp into the lake last May; several thousand more will be released in 2012.

An exotic species used to fight an invasive species? Absolutely.

Although wildlife managers are cautious about releasing non-native species into new environments, this is sometimes the only option when battling invasives. In this case, Asian grass carp are vegetarian and are known to have an insatiable appetite for hydrilla. If all goes as planned, the carp will stay in Claytor Lake, and will help reduce the coverage of hydrilla to less than 100 acres—the Department's management goal.

And if all doesn't go as planned, the state is ready. The fish are sterile, which means there is no risk that they will establish a breeding population in Virginia. Before releasing the fish, wildlife managers attached radio transmitters to 34 carp. These tracking devices confirm that the fish are staying in Claytor Lake and are settled in the areas where hydrilla grows the densest. If the fish move elsewhere, these radio transmitters will reveal their destination. "We're going to be able to see if the fish move into the river," says Kittrell.

Photo courtesy of Jeff Arnold

Grass carp released into the lake to eat hydrilla will be traced via radio transmitters.

growth of other plants, and can reduce the population of trees important to wildlife, such as oaks.

Where did it come from? Tree-of-heaven is native to China, and came to the United States—by way of Europe—as an ornamental tree in 1784. It was a popular landscape tree throughout the 1800s.

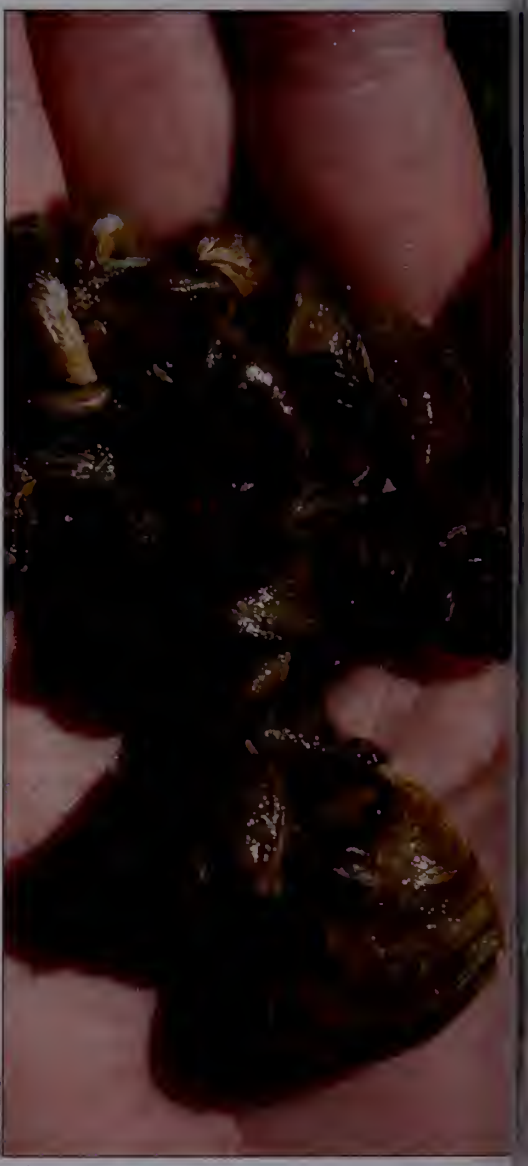
Where is it now? This weedy tree is found across the United States, most commonly east of the Great Plains and west of the Rockies. Tree-of-heaven is established throughout Virginia.

What is Virginia doing about it? Tree-of-heaven can be controlled and locally eradicated by cutting down trees and treating stumps with herbicides. Shenandoah National Park is actively working to remove the tree from the park. Learn more: www.nps.gov/shen/naturescience/tree-of-heaven.htm.

Hydrilla

Also known as waterweed, hydrilla is a submerged freshwater plant that creates dense monocultures wherever it grows and can completely out-compete native plants. As a result, hydrilla significantly degrades fish habitat in natural ponds and reservoirs, and can negatively impact populations of game fish.

Where did it come from? Hydrilla is native to Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. It likely entered the United States via Florida in the 1960s, when aquarium hobbyists released the plant into local waterways.



Lee Walker

Zebra mussels spread rapidly underwater, robbing nutrients needed by other, native species.

Photo courtesy of Jeff Arnold

Grass carp.

Where is it now? Since its introduction in Florida, hydrilla has spread throughout the southeast, north to Connecticut and west to Texas. Hydrilla is also found in California.

What is Virginia doing about it? State and county governments manage several hydrilla control programs. These programs incorporate chemical herbicides, physical removal, or the introduction of biological control agents—such as animals that are known to eat hydrilla. State residents can help by thoroughly cleaning their boating, fishing, and diving equipment after each outing. See *Spotlight on Hydrilla* for more.

Zebra Mussel

These small, freshwater mussels—approximately the size of your thumbnail—cause gigantic problems as invasive species. Zebra mussels attach to anything with a hard surface, including drainage pipes and native mussels. These filter feeders can become so overpopulated in some areas that they essentially clean the water of all its nutrients, robbing native species of their food source.

Where did they come from? Zebra mussels are native to the lakes and inland seas of southeastern Russia. They probably traveled to the United States in the ballast water of ocean-going ships, and were first discovered in the Great Lakes in 1988.

Where are they now? Since 1988, zebra mussels have spread throughout several important watersheds, including the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, and Colorado rivers, among others. Zebra mussels were first identified in Virginia in 2003.

What is Virginia doing about them? After zebra mussels were discovered in Prince William County's Millbrook Quarry, the Department—along with other partners—launched the nation's very first attempt to eradicate the invasive shellfish. The attempt was successful, and no other populations of zebra mussel are currently known to exist in Virginia. However, the mussels remain common elsewhere, which means that prevention efforts are ongoing.

Learn more: www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/zebramussels.asp.

Purple Loosestrife

With its dense spike of colorful flowers and long blooming period, purple loosestrife seems too pretty to be an invasive. But, this rapidly-spreading plant quickly takes over marshy areas, often entirely out-competing native species. The result is a monoculture that offers little food or useful shelter for wetland dwellers such as waterfowl and game fish.

Where did it come from? Purple loosestrife is native to Europe, Asia, northern Africa, and Australia, and was once a popular choice for gardens and parks in the United States.

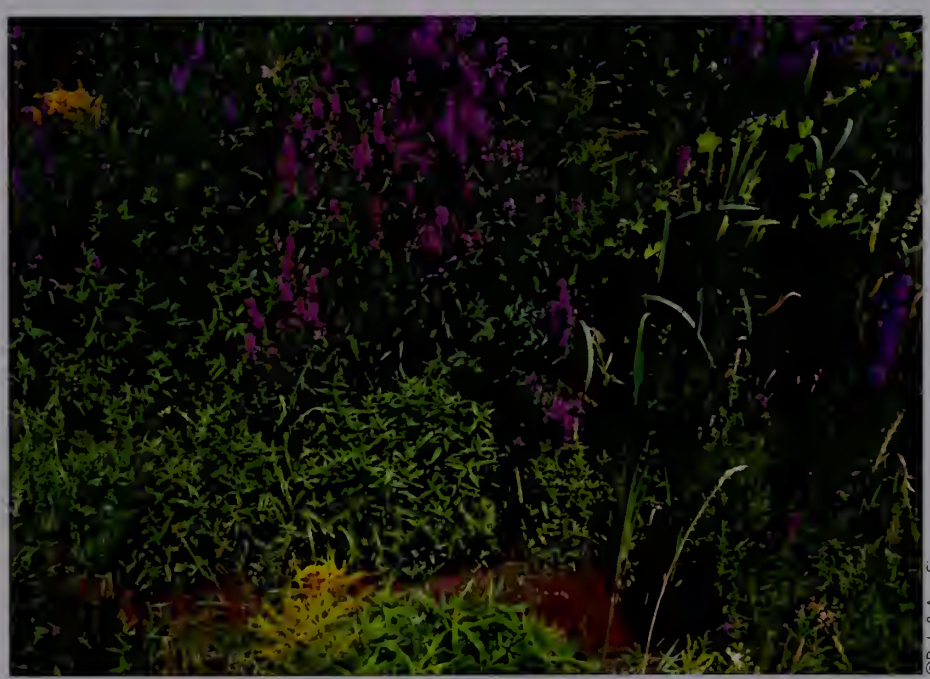
Where is it now? Within the United States, purple loosestrife is in every state except Florida.

What is Virginia doing about it? Purple loosestrife is listed as a noxious weed in the state of Virginia. Various state, county, and non-governmental control efforts are ongoing. Most projects include a combination of physical removal and herbicide use. Learn more: www.chesapeakebay.net/issues/issue/invasive_species.

Cristina Santiestevan writes about wildlife and the environment from her home in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains.

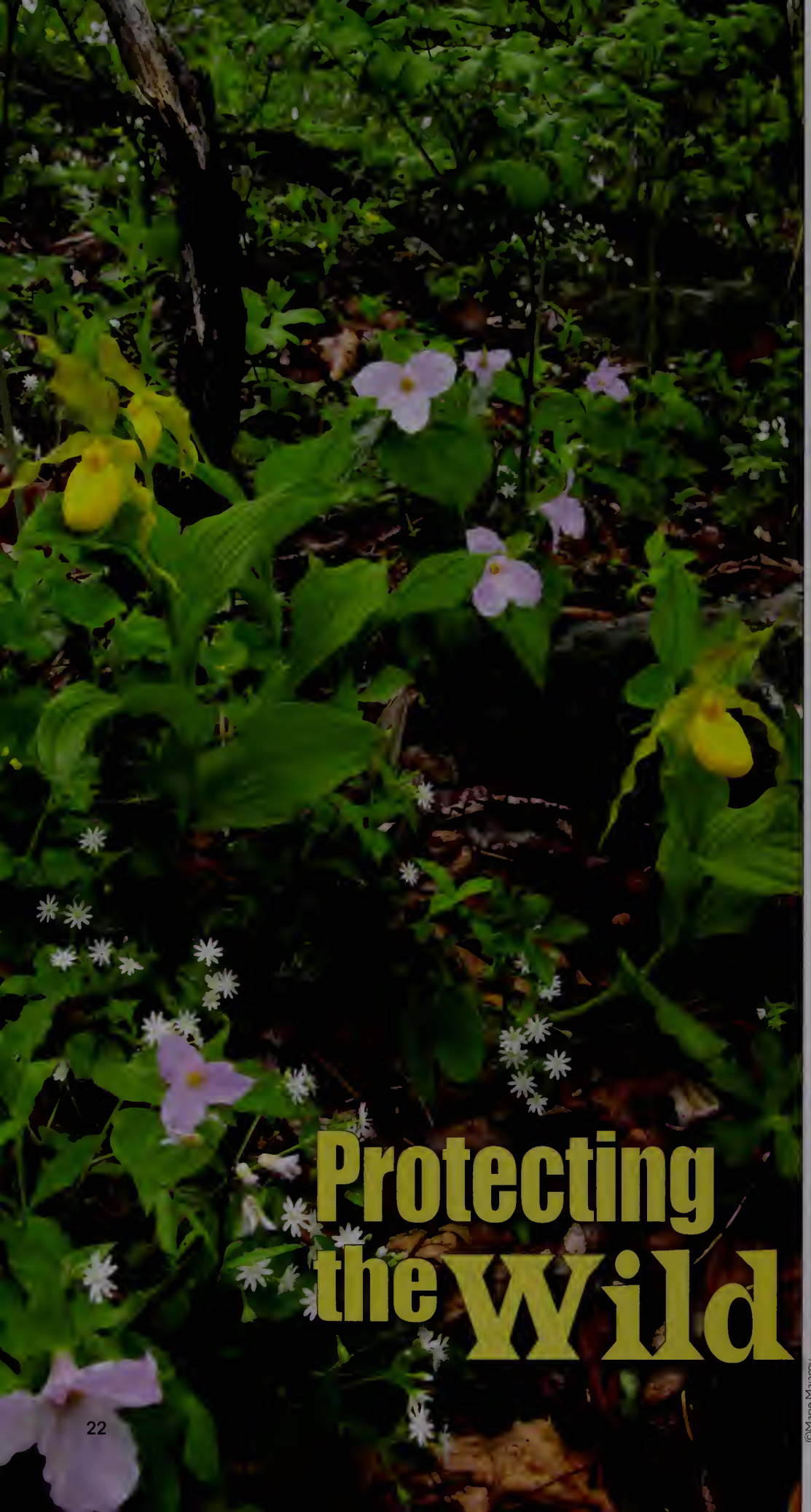
RESOURCES

- Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries: www.dgif.virginia.gov/habitat/
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation: www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/vaisc
- National Invasive Species Information Center: www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: www.fws.gov/invasives
- Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health: www.invasive.org
- National Invasive Species Council: www.invasivespecies.gov



©Rob & Ann Simpson

Purple loosestrife spreads rapidly in marshy areas and takes over more beneficial, native plants that offer food and shelter to wildlife.



Protecting the Wild

A dedicated corps of volunteers and staff help maintain the delicate balance of wildflowers at the G. Richard Thompson WMA.

by Marie Majarov

Springtime! Wildflowers! The 3,967-acre G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area takes center stage each year with its dazzling display of ephemeral wildflowers, including a profusion of large-flowered trillium *(Trillium grandiflorum)*, the largest contiguous stand of trillium in Virginia and possibly, all of North America.

Located in northwestern Fauquier County, the wildlife management area (Thompson) is one of the most popular owned by the Department. A series of forested inclines and benches rise to the crest of the Blue Ridge where the Appalachian Trail meanders across the property. Acquired by the Department (DGIF) for preservation and recreational opportunities in the 1970s, there are semi-open areas, several major streams, and ecologically unique spring seeps. (See Virginia Wildlife, May 2001.) DGIF's Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail includes stops here, as well.

If you have never seen the extraordinary flowers that abound in this lovely locale, a visit is definitely in order! You're in for a treat. It's breathtakingly beautiful everywhere you look.

DGIF's Land and Facilities Manager, biologist Ron Hughes, is a naturalist with 20 years of experience at Thompson. He calls the property "truly unique on many

©Marie Majarov

©Marie Majarov

Trillium, lady's slipper, star chickweed, violets, and other wildflowers create a floral carpet (left). Here, a large-flowered trillium, *Trillium grandiflorum*.

levels." It represents an ecosystem flourishing in a delicate balance, a treasury of flora and fauna, a haven for pollinators, exceptional outdoor opportunities, and ongoing, dedicated conservation efforts by DGIF and partners: the Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS), the Natural Heritage Program (NHP) of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Master Naturalists, and last, but by no means least, fervent deer hunters. Yes, hunters play a critical role in managing this magical floral community. Keep reading.

The Trillium

Trillium are perennial members of the lily family. The "tri" is apt, as all trillium parts are arranged in threes or multiples of three: leaves, waxy white petals that flush pink with age, sepals, pollen-coated stamens, and even internal reproductive structures. Ranging in heights of 6 to 20 inches, trillium love rich soils in undisturbed, wet, forested coves. Most trillium that is; remember, the trillium here are "unique." Hughes stresses that it is unusual to find this remarkable stand of trillium flowers, the buds of which open in sparkling shades of white to pale pink to deep rose, growing on a mountaintop of all places!

In 1990, in recognition of this uniqueness, DGIF worked with the Natural Heritage Program (whose mission is to conserve biodiversity through "inventory, protection, and stewardship") and entered into a cooperative agreement with the VNPS to protect these extraordinary trillium, as well as the rare, nodding trillium and yellow lady's slippers amongst them. VNPS President Sally Anderson notes that Thompson was formally entered into the VNPS registry of our state's outstanding native plant sites "in accordance with our mission to protect native plants and the habitats that sustain them."

The primary habitat at the management area is a secondary growth, deciduous forest—oak-hickory—notes Hughes. "Although due to the gypsy moth, only pockets of oak remain. Lush hickory, ash, and distinctive tuliptrees predominate," he adds. Trillium bloomed here long ago before these trees, Hughes elaborates, and "...incredibly, a viable seed-bank remained after these slopes were cleared for agriculture." Trillium and other wildflowers returned when an undisturbed hardwood forest succeeded, providing their necessary shady habitat. You see, spring ephemerals race to bloom in the sunshine before the canopy fills in, but their leaves need the summer shade to continue nourishing rhizomes for next year's blossoms.

Trillium are important wildlife plants, providing cover for some and food for many. Pollinated by and supportive of beneficial populations of native bees, flies, butterflies, and even some beetles, the oily flesh (elaiosomes) around their seeds also attracts and is savored by native ants—dispersers of the

©Dwight Dyke

Hunters assist in the battle to protect native plants by keeping game animals, that would otherwise trample the plants, in check.

©Marie Majarov

Showy orchis, *Galearis spectabilis*.

seeds. Deer thoroughly enjoy devouring young tender trillium shoots... and here comes the good management efforts by hunters: keeping the deer population at reasonable levels. Hughes and Anderson both note that in the adjacent Sky Meadows State Park, the same mountain habitat where hunting is not permitted, the deer population is prolific and there are no trillium!

More Native Beauties and Wildlife

Several glorious colonies of rare yellow lady's slippers, the largest of our wild orchids, are scattered throughout Thompson's rich woods. Their spectacular looks are designed to lure pollinators into visiting. Composite flowers, however, such as trout lilies, provide much easier access. Think of them as good citizens that help stabilize soil, contribute important nutrients, and attract bumblebee queens.

"Spring wildflowers are crucial for pollinators," explains Dr. T'ai Roulston, UVA entomologist from nearby Blandy Experimental Farm. "The greatest diversity of bees occurs in the spring, with many species only active at this time. In spring, bumblebee queens found their colonies and honeybees make most of the honey they will make all year."

Umbrella-like mayapples, bearing elegant white blossoms below their leaves, cluster along path edges and throughout the understory. Ripe in late summer, mayapple fruits are relished by mammals, birds, and especially box turtles. Small critters like birds, frogs, and salamanders throughout Thompson seek shelter and cover under these umbrellas and also the larger green leaves of the seep skunk cabbage plants.

Peeking out from around the millions (yes, millions) of trillium and profuse mayapples are additional springtime treasures: bloodroot, coltsfoot, showy orchis, columbine, wild geranium, star chickweed, wild ginger, toothworts, an array of violets in a whole host of colors, squawroot, Solomon's seal, spring-beauty, and rue-anemone. Redbud, flowering dogwood, and spicebush blossoms reach toward the sky and new young hickory trees often masquerade as spring flowers. More than 90 wildflower species in leaf, bud, or fruit can be observed here each spring!

In summer, lush green foliage forms a rich canopy and understory. New flowers like magnificent red Canada lilies on long slender stalks and jewelweed absolutely glow; white flowers of black cohosh, wild hydrangea, and elderberries are scattered everywhere. Milkweeds suited to forest habitat are available for monarchs and other butterflies. A multitude of swallowtails, sulphurs, mourning cloaks, red admirals, pearly crescentspots, and Eastern commas flutter about as do dragon- and damselflies. Woodland sunflowers, goldenrods, and asters are among the summer flowers

©Marie Majarov

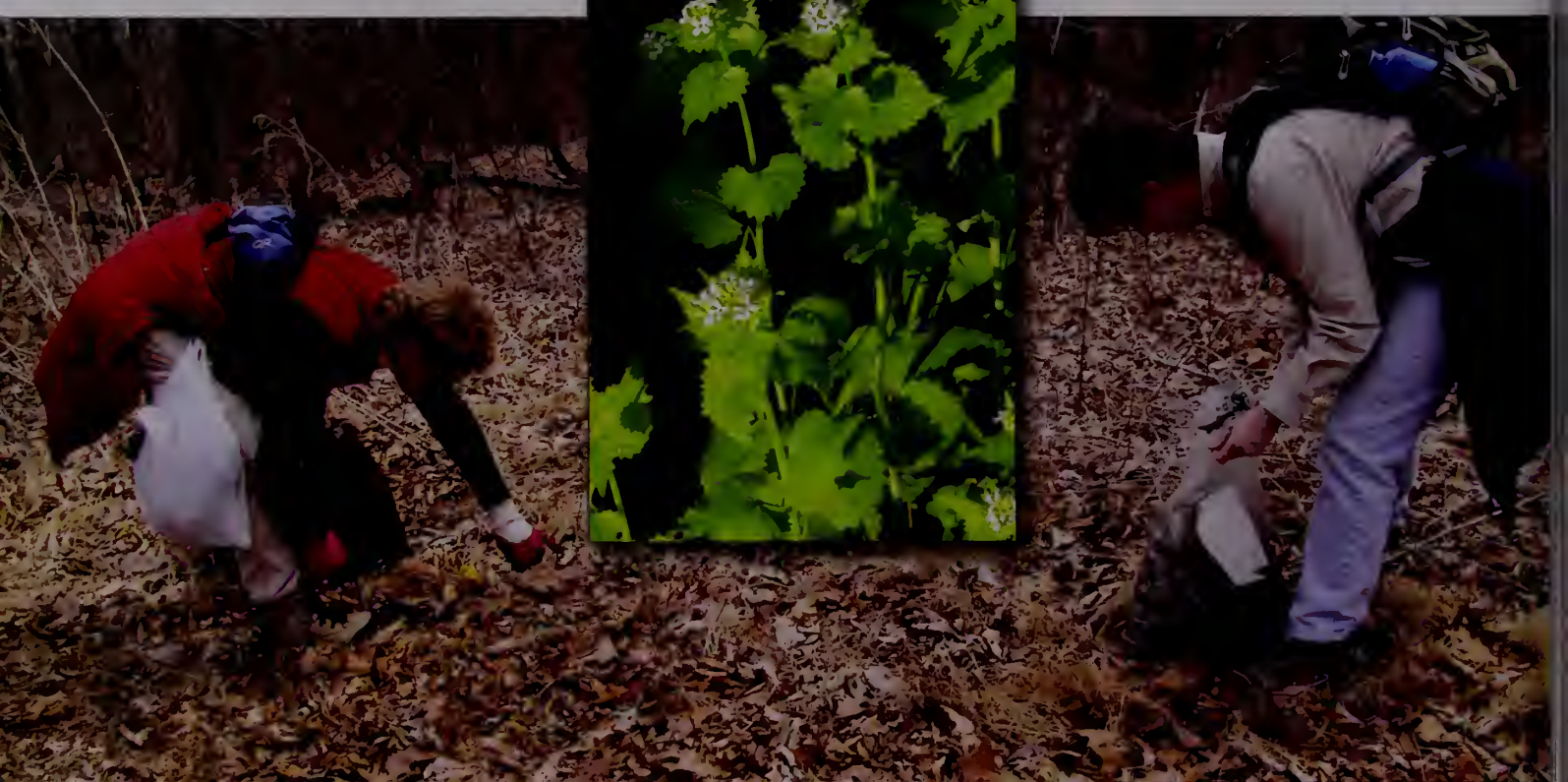
Woodland sunflowers, *Halianthus sp.*, provide nectar to many pollinator species like the Hover fly which helps control aphids.

stretching into fall and providing wonderful sources of nectar.

Numerous game species call Thompson home. Bear, deer, turkey, small game, and furbearers all find plentiful food and shelter. See the link on page 25 and parking area kiosks for full hunting information.

Birding is spectacular at the wildlife management area with its plethora of woodland songbirds, including Neotropical migrants: warblers, scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak, thrushes (wood and verry) and wood-pewee. Of particular importance is the breeding population of cerulean warblers, a

VNPS President Sally Anderson and Carrie Blair pull and bag garlic mustard sprouts onsite to prevent the spread of this aggressive invasive. Photos ©Marie Majarov.



©Marie Majarov

Mayapple, *Podophyllum peltatum*, has a creamy white blossom. Its fall fruit, a fleshy lemon-like berry, is enjoyed by mammals, birds, and especially, box turtles.

species of special concern. Wildflowers supply crucial necessities: food such as the berries born on the striking jack-in-the pulpit and even nesting opportunities. Yellowthroats are said to nest in the hollow of the skunk cabbage spathe.

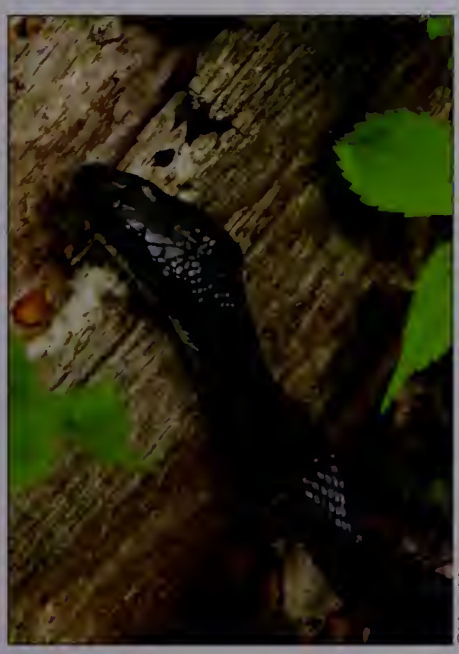
Invasives and Management

"Keeping the management area a beautiful, diverse forest ecosystem for all wildlife is an ongoing struggle," explains Hughes, "as there are so many invasives to manage today." First and foremost, management in the forested areas means not displacing native plants. Fortunately, the number of visitors who view the wildflowers here have been deeply respectful, preventing swift overwhelming invasions of damaging Japanese stilt-grass.

In the trillium area, VNPS takes a leadership role with the chief invasive found there: garlic mustard! In early spring, before garlic mustard sets thousands of long-lived seeds, and early enough not to trample precious native species, VNPS members are joined by master naturalists and volunteers and hold a "garlic mustard pull"—scouring for garlic mustard sprouts which are immediately pulled and bagged for disposal.

Capable of self-pollination, garlic mustard is a severe threat to all species that depend on native plants for food. In its native Europe, 30-plus species feed on it, keeping its density under good control. Here it will quickly seed and take over an entire forest understory, as no insects, mammals, or birds like its garlicky taste. White-tailed deer won't eat it, but scatter its seeds as they brush against the plants looking for other forage. With vigorous, regular effort, the VNPS appears to be winning this critical battle.

Other invasives noted by Hughes to be problematic in the semi-open areas include autumn olive, ailanthus ("tree-of-heaven") which has the nasty habit of exuding toxins that inhibit other plants from growing anywhere nearby, and the aggressive Asiatic bittersweet vine. Birds enjoy the fruits of these plants and unfortunately disperse the seeds, often over some distance. Tragically, there are no natural insects or animals to curtail the rapid spread of these invasives. Management techniques such as pulling, grinding, timber harvest, and fire must be carefully tailored to each invasive's growth pattern to prevent their spread.



©Marie Majarov

The black rat snake is just one of many beneficial species that call the WMA home.

Constant learning, observation, and study must be ongoing for DGIF and partners to understand and protect this truly special place. Without management of invasives and control of many wildlife populations (remember the deer hunters), we will lose the beautiful flowers and the marvelous habitat of which they are such an integral part.

Grab your access permit or hunting or fishing license, which support these conservation efforts. Enjoy the grandeur, stay on the trails, and know that Thompson is so very much more than beautiful.

Marie and Milan Majarov (www.majarov.com) live in Winchester and are nature enthusiasts and active in the Virginia and Mason-Dixon Outdoor Writers Associations. Marie is a Virginia Master Naturalist.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

G.Richard Thompson WMA:
www.dgif.virginia.gov/wmas/detail.asp?pid=31

Natural Heritage Program:
www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/index.shtml

Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail at GRTWMA:
www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt/site.asp?trail=2&loop=MFR&site=MFR02

Virginia Master Naturalists:
www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/

Virginia Native Plant Society:
www.vnps.org

On the value of native plants:
Bringing Nature Home, by Douglas W. Tallamy. Published by Timber Press, 2009.

Wildflowers in our area:
Finding Wildflowers in the Washington-Baltimore Area, by Cristol Fleming, Marion Blois Lobstein, and Barbara Tufty. Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

An Undiscovered Tr

A robust striper population is just one of the Roanoke River's many surprises.

story & photos
by Beau Beasley

My wife frequently has to remind me to watch the road and not the wildlife. Yes, yes, I know that the life-and-death stuff happens on the road. But that was a hawk sitting on that fence post we just passed! I admit to finding the birds, deer, and even groundhogs more engaging than the pavement from time to time. But on this particular morning, it was the rain that held my attention. It was coming down in torrents as I made my way south from Warrenton on Route 29, and I periodically cast my eyes skyward in an effort to make out any sunlight, even as I kept a white-knuckle grip on the steering wheel.

I pulled over and reached for my cell phone—yes, yes, I know—and called Blane Chocklett, who owns New Angle Fishing Adventures. Blane is a well-respected fly-fishing guide who had promised to show me the ropes on the Roanoke River that morning. I'd wanted to fish with Blane for some years, but between his heavy bookings and my hectic schedule we never seemed to be able to get together. The day had finally come, and with it had come the rain that would no doubt spoil our hard-earned fishing plans.

Much to my surprise, Blane was unfazed by the downpour: "Well, the river is a bit high. But I'm certain we'll find fish. Take your time, and I'll see you when you get here."

I was encouraged by his confidence, but I had my doubts. I kept an eye on the skies all the way to Roanoke and was fairly certain that our trip would be a complete bust.

I met Blane near the Vic Thomas striped bass hatchery in Campbell County, located near the river, which was already the color of chocolate milk, and moved my gear to his tricked-out Toyota FJ Cruiser. It bore all the signs of a guide's mobile office: rods and reels and waders and flies and generally enough gear to outfit a fly shop in the backseat. Behind the SUV was Blane's beautiful, 16-foot Hyde drift boat. Though many used to believe that drift boats were only serviceable on

tasure

the country's large western rivers, they've become quite popular in the Old Dominion and elsewhere. The thought occurred to me that even if the rain had spoiled the fishing, a pleasant drift down the river would make a nice consolation prize.

Before hitting the water we decided to check out the hatchery, where staff members described the strong run of stripers they had seen that year. We watched them feed the baby stripers. Hatchery staff gently remove 300 to 400 adult stripers from the river each year and take them to the hatchery, where their eggs are hatched out in about 48 hours. Adult fish are then released to the river unharmed; estimates of the mortality rate run at only about one percent.

After they hatch, young stripers are placed in rearing ponds and fed on zooplankton, which gives the ponds a striking green tint. Blane and I watched as hatchery workers sprayed biodegradable horse feed into the ponds, which promotes the growth of the zooplankton on which the young stripers feast. Staff keep a close eye on the young stripers because at some point they would rather eat each other than this food.

Each year the hatchery raises about 15 to 20 million fry, which are eventually stocked in waters around the state. In addition, the Department often trades striper fry for shad, hybrid striped bass, catfish, and other species of fry from neighboring North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky.

Now, Blane and I were ready to try to land a few stripers ourselves. He deftly backed the boat into the river and we began our float, with Blane at the oars with an eye downstream and me at the casting platform in the bow. The river was beautiful and quiet as I cast a Clouser Minnow toward some blowndown trees, but I wondered aloud whether the Roanoke was worth a trip when the acclaimed James and New rivers were relatively close by.

"It's an excellent river in the spring, as a matter of fact," Blane responded with confidence. "It can hold its own against any warmwater river in the state. There are times," he continued, "during the spring run that I've seen schools of young stripers nearly half the length of a football field in this river. Matter of fact, there have been times when there are so many fish that I have stripers hitting the sides of the boat while making their way upstream."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Interested in the Roanoke but not sure where to start? You might call one of the local fishing stores or fly shops in your area. Fly anglers will need 7- to 9-weight rods up to 9 feet long, though at times a 6 weight will work. Floating lines will work when the fish are hitting the surface, but be sure to have sinking and intermediate lines available. The day I was on the river with Blane, we used Rio's Outbound Saltwater sinking lines and found them very effective. Flies run the gamut from 1/0 on the high side to size #4 in a variety of colors. You'll have nearly all your bases covered with Clouser Minnows and Half and Halfs.

New Angle Fishing Adventures, Troutville
(540) 354-1774
www.blanechocklett.com

Roanoke Orvis
(540) 345-3635
www.orvis.com

Gander Mountain Roanoke
(540) 362-3658
www.gandermountain.com

Angler's Lane, Forest
(434)385-0200
www.anglerslane.com

Left, river guide Blane Chocklett holds a nice striped bass he caught on a yellow half and half that morning.

I've known Blane for a long time, and he isn't inclined to exaggeration. His creative fly patterns, some of which are sold commercially by Umpqua Feather Merchants (the largest manufacturer of commercial-made flies in the country), have become very popular. His patterns have been fished by countless enthusiasts all over the world, fooling both warm and saltwater species. But if you're expecting him to brag about his skill or his success, you have a long wait ahead of you. Indeed, Blane routinely seems uncomfortable in the limelight. When you get to know him, however, there's nothing aloof about Blane Chocklett. And if you think that Chocklett's fly-tying prowess is impressive, you should see the man cast.

As we continued to float downstream, my line went tight, I immediately set the hook, and I prepped for the tug-of-war—before I realized that I was fighting a largemouth tree limb submerged beneath the water line.

"Don't be too hard on yourself, Beau," said Blane. "On a typical day here even a good angler can lose half a dozen flies because of the structure." Of course, all of that structure is great for fish. I tied on another fly and returned to casting for that hungry striper that would slurp up my offering.

Blane quickly spotted a particular bend in the river that normally held fish and deftly maneuvered the boat just upstream and to the right of a brush pile created by uprooted trees that had been pushed down. He directed me to cast my pattern close to the branches but to keep it moving to avoid connecting with another submerged branch. After a few casts I was about to give up when a sudden jolt hit my line. The striper tore off into the middle of the river where it could use the current against me.

"Let him run some, Beau," Blane encouraged me. "That knot I tied will hold, and I think you have him out of the brush for now."

After a considerable fight, the fish made one last-ditch effort to head back to the brush pile for safety. "Don't let him back in there, Beau," said Blane calmly. With Blane's good knots and a little bit of luck, I landed a 16-inch-long, fat, healthy striper that didn't waste any time beating a hasty retreat back to the brush pile when I released him a moment later.

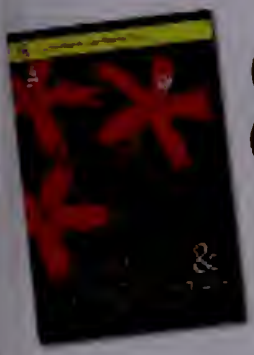
The Roanoke River is among the most underrated fisheries in the state, perhaps because she's so often overshadowed by her larger, sister rivers like the James and the New. But in fact the Roanoke, often called the Staunton, boasts a surprisingly diverse fish population. From late March through April the Roanoke teems with stripers, for which she's known, but healthy smallies can also be had here if you know when and where to go.

Surprisingly good trout fishing is available right in Roanoke itself: You'll find pretty easy access along the city's greenway, from Wasena Park downstream along Wiley Drive to River's Edge Sports Complex. Anglers can also find greenway access points in Salem, from Colorado Street down to the Apperson Road Bridge, and in Roanoke County at Greenhill Park. Both of these spots are delayed-harvest trout waters and are worth a serious look.

Blane and I had a great day talking about our families and all the things that make life worth living. We talked about politics, the state of the economy, and our future business plans, but mostly we enjoyed the serenity of the river and its beautiful surroundings. I went on to catch more stripers that day, and I made up my mind then and there: Rain or shine, I'd be heading back to fish the Roanoke for stripers again next spring.

Beau Beasley (www.beaubeasley.com) is an award-winning conservation writer and the director of the Virginia Fly Fishing Festival (www.vaflyfishingfestival.org).

Staff at the Vic Thomas hatchery in Campbell County spray biodegradable horse feed into a pond onsite to promote the growth of zooplankton—which young stripers feed upon.



Outdoor Classics

by Beth Hester

Wildflowers and Plant Communities of the Southern Appalachians and Piedmont: A Naturalist's Guide to the Carolinas, Virginia, Tennessee, & Georgia

by Timothy P. Spira

2011 University of North Carolina Press
www.uncpress.unc.edu
Soft cover with color photos
$26.00

"The region covered represents one of the most biologically diverse areas of North America. In addition to having the highest mountains of eastern North America, the southern Appalachians harbor some of the most extensive broad-leaved temperate forests in the world, as well as the largest remaining stands of old-growth forest in the eastern United States. No other mountain region in America has more species of plants."
–Tim P. Spira

When I received this field guide in the mail, I couldn't imagine how it would distinguish itself from the countless other plant and wildflower guides already on the market. I was in for a pleasant surprise. Aside from being lavishly illustrated with accurate, color photographs that make it easy to identify both common and rare plants, shrubs, wildflowers, trees, and vines, the various plant species are seen in context, within the mosaic of natural communities in which they exist. This holistic approach, says the author, botanist Tom Spira, "better reflects the natural world, as plants, like other organisms, don't live in isolation; they coexist and interact in myriad ways."

Apart from the value of the narratives that accompany the plant community and species profiles, an introductory chapter helps the reader grasp the complexities of the mountain and piedmont environments, and the chapter includes Spira's thoughtful primer for understanding natural communities, including conservation concerns and the impacts of urban sprawl and habitat loss upon them.

Twenty-one major plant communities are described in detail, and the refreshing and easy-to-use format allows readers to explore each of the 340 featured plants in terms of their natural history, ecology, habitat, range, and uses—where applicable. Highly recommended.

Trout in the Classroom Ambassador Onboard

Besides being beautifully colored, brook trout are an icon for cold, clean water.

Virginia teachers from the Blue Ridge to the Beltway are capitalizing on this by using the popular and rapidly growing Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program to help students learn and appreciate the importance of healthy watersheds.

This school year, 187 classrooms in Virginia are raising trout in aquariums, and approximately 4,000 students from third grade through high school are learning about environmental science and about responsibility.

Recognizing the potential for TIC's growth and the importance of inspiring a new generation of environmental stewards, the Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited partnered with the Department to hire Rob Tucker to manage and support the program statewide. Tucker started working in July after a 25-year career in higher education. He resides in Radford and is an avid fly angler, kayaker, biker, and cook.

©Sally Mills

Rob Tucker

Tucker works with a network of volunteers from Trout Unlimited and other conservation organizations to promote the program, secure funding, purchase equipment, and deliver trout eggs far and wide.

"I feel like a modern-day Johnny Appleseed, traveling around Virginia and spreading trout," said Tucker. "Meeting so many people face to face has enabled me to witness the passion that teachers, students, and volunteers have for this program. And I already have an extensive waiting list of teachers who are eager to get involved."

Students raise trout from eggs to fingerlings and then release them in the spring into streams with water quality pure enough to give the speckled beauties a viable chance for survival.

Aquarium water is tested daily for temperature, PH, dissolved oxygen, ammonia,

nitrates, and nitrites. Classes regularly make field trips to conduct the same tests on their local streams and to turn over rocks in search of aquatic insects that are not tolerant of pollution and hence, indicate stream health.

Teachers develop creative ways to use the program as a basis for teaching science and also language arts, mathematics, social studies, ecology, and art. One important outcome is that students become aware of the importance of protecting the local environment and how it affects everything from drinking water supplies to the economy.

TIC was started in Virginia in 2004 in the Martinsville area, thanks primarily to the efforts and generosity of Dr. David Jones. The program brings Trout Unlimited's mission, "To conserve, protect and restore North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds," to a new generation of conservationists, naturalists, and anglers.

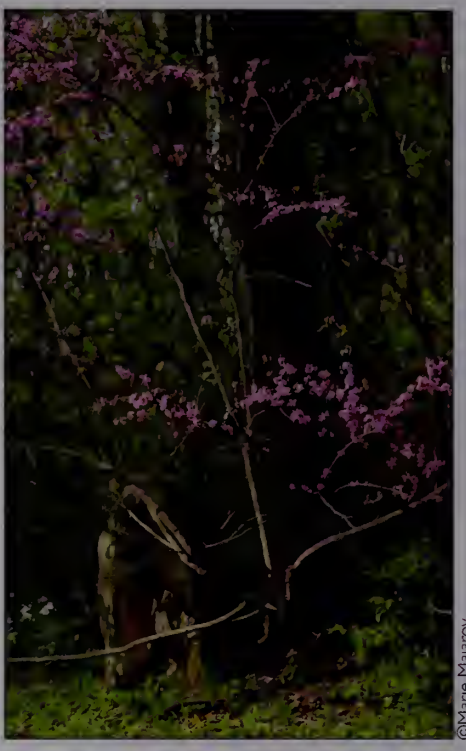
To learn more about Trout in the Classroom, visit www.vctu.org/tic.

This story was contributed by DGIF staff member, Rob Tucker.

Dominion Cultivates Learning with Project Plant It!

Mother Nature and trees take center stage this spring as third-graders throughout Virginia participate in Dominion's Project Plant It! program, developed to educate children, plant trees, and improve the environment. More than 25,000 students across the commonwealth are enrolled in the 2012 program.

In January, teachers received a kit with lesson plans, posters, stickers, and other instructional tools for the classroom. With Project Plant It!, students learn about the value of trees in daily life, in industry, and in the ecosystem. Also, the program provides each participating student with a tree seedling to plant at home on Arbor Day, April 27, enabling children to care for their own tree while watching it grow. The website, www.projectplantit.com, features interactive games and fun outdoor activities that families can enjoy together, as well as videos about trees. Teachers can even download educational materials and order tree seedlings from the website at no cost.



©Marie Majarov

2012 Virginia Hunter Education Challenge May 4–6

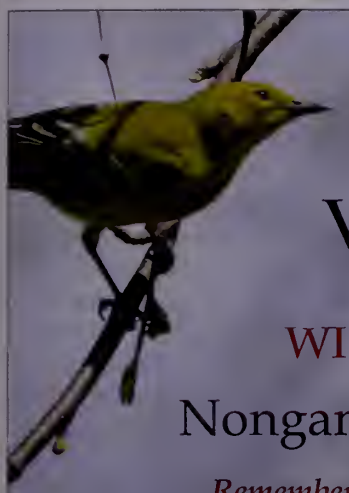
The annual Hunter Education Challenge will take place at the Holiday Lake 4-H Center in Appomattox. Contact David Dodson at david.dodson@dgif.virginia.gov for more information.

Photo courtesy of © 2012 Douglas Ogle

Trout Heritage Day

April 7, 2012

www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/trout/trout-heritage-day/



VIRGINIA'S NONGAME WILDLIFE PROGRAM

Nongame Tax Checkoff Fund

Remember that this is the year you can make a difference by helping to support the management of Virginia's wildlife.

Celebrate the 29th Anniversary of Virginia's Nongame Wildlife Program by helping to support essential research and management of Virginia's native birds, fish, and nongame animals.

Consider making a contribution to the Virginia Nongame Wildlife Program by using Schedule ADJ when you file your state taxes.

If you would like to make a cash donation directly to the Virginia Nongame Wildlife Program using a VISA or MasterCard, you can visit the Department's website or mail a check made out to: Virginia Nongame Program.

Mail to:
Virginia Nongame Program
P. O. Box 11104
Richmond, VA 23230-1104

©Gregory J. Pels

12th Annual Virginia Fly Fishing Festival

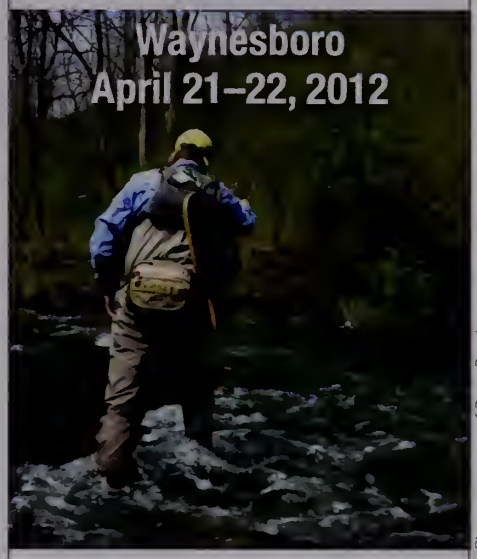


Photo courtesy of Beau Beasley

Expert Fly Anglers
On-stream Instruction • Lectures
Casting Classes
Catch & Release Trout Pool for Kids
Over 20 Sponsors • Exhibits
$10,000 in Raffle Prizes
Daily Admission $20

www.vaflyfishingfestival.org

IMAGE OF THE MONTH

Congratulations go to Donald Bradley of Colonial Beach for his wonderful photograph of robin chicks in a nest built in his colorful front door wreath. Not only did Donald photograph the robins at their unusual nest site, he also captured a self-portrait! Donald photographed the whole process of nest building, eggs laid, and chicks fledging! Great job, Donald!

You are invited to submit one to five of your best photographs to "Image of the Month," Virginia Wildlife Magazine, P.O. Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. Send original slides, super high-quality prints, or high-res jpeg, tiff, or raw files on a disk and include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or other shipping method for return. Also, please include any pertinent information regarding how and where you captured the image and what camera and settings you used, along with your phone number. We look forward to seeing and sharing your work with our readers.

Dear Luke,
I moved down from Brooklyn, NY, recently and have fallen in love with bird dogs. I just bought a nice started 2-year-old pointer that responded perfectly to any of the commands the trainer gave him. However, when we went bird hunting for the first time the other day, when I gave him his release command he just stood with a puzzled look on his face. When he did go out and look for birds and I wanted him to come in, he was very hesitant and looked at me as if I was speaking a foreign language. What gives?
Vic S., Whitestone

Dear Vic,
I believe your problem is you *are* speaking a foreign language—at least to your dog. You both understand English but your dog understands *southern* English. It is a common problem with many northerners who move south. Southerners have a propensity for making one-syllable words into two- and sometimes three-syllable words. And we can sometimes make a two-syllable word sound like it has only one. For instance, when you tell your dog to come "here," it should sound like "hee-yah." The word "there" should sound like "thar-yah."

Ol' Jones has the same problem at home. Mrs. Ol' Jones is from Philly and when she tells him, "Gyt your feet auwf the coughfee table," he has no idea what she is saying. But her body language is a dead give-away. My suggestion is to spend some time in or around the counties of Patrick, Halifax, or Dickerson hee-yah in Virginia. They know how a southerner shooed sow-ound. U-al pick up the lingo in no time!

Dear Luke,
My German shorthaired pointer is going to have her first litter of puppies soon. I believe it will be a large litter. Although I think I have prepared everything as far as a wire cage to contain the pups and litter box for her, I am somewhat concerned about the mess. My wife wasn't too keen on this idea of raising a litter of pointers for fun to begin with. Is there anything I can do keep the homestead neat?
Brent B., Boulder, Colorado

Dear Brent,
You are correct to be concerned. Puppies do three things: sleep, eat, and that other thing. They will require a great deal of attention and once they get more mobile, you will be amazed at where you will find their handiwork. I spoke to Ron Samuels at Amber Run Kennels in Amelia, and he told me of a device called Potty Park which he says works great in cutting down on the paperwork, so to speak. Check out Amber Run Kennels or Potty Park online. Ron and his wife, Marge, have been raising Lab puppies for years so they know their puppy stuff.

Dear Luke,
I am a great fan of your Off the Leash column and like to keep up with you and Ol' Jones. There is one thing that bothers me, however, and that is you constantly refer to Ol' Jones's wife as MOJ or Mrs. Ol' Jones. Based on what I have read in the past, I think both you and Ol' Jones are very *lucky* indeed to have someone put up with all of your shenanigans! To refer to that apparently charming and energetic lady as old, in my opinion is shameful and you should refer to "MOJ" in more flattering terms. After the constant embarrassment she seems to have to endure, I can understand her desire for anonymity. However, I know the dear girl has a name and she should be referred to in a more accurate and fitting manner.
Joan H., Richmond

Dear Joan,
I am always interested in what our readers think and your point, like a stylish English setter, is well taken. I shared your thoughts with Ol' Jones and he readily agreed we should take your suggestion to heart. I must say that having Ol' Jones act quickly on any suggestion at any time is rather unusual and, as in most cases with Ol' Jones, quick action doesn't always equate to quick thinking. On the one hand he wants to respect MOJ's right to privacy, and on the other, respects greatly the sage wisdom of your advice.

"She's right!" Ol' Jones declared after reading your letter. "We'll call her Mrs. Lucky, instead!"

You'll have to pardon me while I fix up the spare bedroom. I've got the feeling when 'Mrs. Lucky' reads this, I'll be seeing a lot more of Ol' Jones.

Keep the letters coming and always remember,

Keep a Leg Up,
Luke

Luke is a black Labrador retriever who spends his spare time hunting up good stories with his best friend, Clarke C. Jones. You can contact Luke and Clarke at www.clarkecjones.com.

"You trying to tell me something, Alice?"

PHOTO TIPS

by Lynda Richardson

Using Metering Modes for Better Exposures

Capturing a proper exposure has always been one of the most difficult tasks for many photographers. With today's digital cameras and software programs, the mantra seems to be: "I can always fix it in Photoshop!" As a film shooter for over 25 years, I can tell you it is much better to get the exposures correct in the camera. Wouldn't you rather spend your time shooting than sitting in front of a computer fixing this problem?

With that said, there is one set of features on your digital camera that can help you capture better exposures right off the bat. That is the metering modes. Metering modes allow a camera to use pre-determined metering zones to scan an image and create an average exposure based on the selected auto focus point, distance from the subject, colors, hues, and tones of the scene, as well as lighting—particularly backlighting. Exposure bias leans toward the autofocus point being used, thus ensuring that the point of interest has been exposed for properly. Depending on your camera model, you will have a varying number of metering zones.

There are basically three metering modes: 1) evaluative/matrix or multi-zone, 2) center-weighted, and 3) spot.

Evaluative/Matrix or Multi-zone Metering

The evaluative metering mode, also known as matrix or multi-zone metering, measures light intensity throughout a scene using several preset points or metering zones and then averaging the results. This is a good mode to use for an average scene.

Center-weighted Metering

Center-weighted concentrates the metering on 60 to 80 percent of the center of the image area. The camera takes information from all around the frame but gives more weight to metering points around the center. The advantage of this mode is that if you have a backlit subject, you can concentrate on getting an accurate exposure of the subject without the bright backlight skewing the results.

Spot Metering

For spot metering, the camera only measures a very small area in the center of the scene. This is approximately between one and five percent of the viewfinder area. Spot metering is very accurate and is not influenced by other areas in the frame. It is commonly used to shoot very high contrast scenes. I use this metering mode a lot in my wildlife photography, especially when shooting animals in shady areas or small insects.

A fun experiment with metering modes would be to select a subject with either bright or dark surroundings; then, focus on the subject and shoot using the different modes and see what exposures you come up with. Try a backlit and front-lit subject. Try a scene with a bright sky or dark water. If you change modes while focusing on the same subject, are the exposures the same or not? Which metering mode works best in a particular situation? Does it matter if you are shooting manually, aperture- or shutter-priority, or automatic?

Learning to use the metering modes of your camera to their best advantage can really aid you in your goal to make the best exposures possible! Good Luck and Happy Shooting!

A female red wolf hides in her enclosure at the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in Manteo, NC. Using a Canon EOS 500mm f/4.0 IS lens and the spot metering mode, I was able to capture a nice image of the wolf in very low light. Photo ©Lynda Richardson.

Lynda Richardson's Photography Workshops

All classes are held at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. Go to www.lewisginter.org to register and look under Adult & Family Education or call (804) 262-9887 X322 (M–F, 9AM – 5PM).

Making the Most of Your Digital Camera on April 18, 21, 25, 28, & May 2. Learn the various settings on your camera and how to make them work for you.

Dining In

by Ken and Maria Perrotte

Venison Red Curry with Jasmine Rice

A couple of Thai restaurants not far from home offer delicious curry dishes, prompting us to wonder how venison might taste in a curry concoction. This recipe incorporates what we liked best from the restaurants' very different taste experiences as well as research into how locals in places like New Zealand and the United Kingdom make their venison curry.

Coconut milk, a staple in a Thai curry, can be adjusted to affect the dish's sweetness. Balance sweet with heat by adjusting the coconut milk, curry paste, and cayenne or red pepper flakes to your taste. Red curry typically isn't as spicy as green curry.

Coconut milk, fish sauce, and curry paste are available in the Oriental food section of most supermarkets. Coconut milk prices can vary substantially between brands. Make sure you stir the milk after opening the can.

We used the top and eye of the round, but shoulder stew meat would also work. Whatever meat you use should be well trimmed of sinew and fat. You're basically browning and then braising the meat. The braising makes it near fork tender and helps assimilate the curry flavors.

While we used an oven, this can be adapted for a crockpot. It's easy to make ahead in large batches.

Ingredients

1 pound venison, cut into ¾- to 1-inch cubes
1½ tablespoons olive oil
½ tablespoon sliced or slivered ginger (we sometimes use a vegetable peeler)
½ teaspoon curry powder
2 tablespoons red curry paste
10 ounces coconut milk (for sweeter dish, use the whole 14-ounce can)
¼ cup vegetable broth
1 teaspoon fish sauce
1 teaspoon sugar
1 squirt lime juice
¼ teaspoon each cumin, cayenne pepper, and coriander
1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
½ small onion
½ red and/or yellow bell pepper
1 carrot
1 cup snow peas (sugar snap peas)
Salt and pepper to taste

Other ingredients (harder to find):
4 Kaffir lime leaves
4 Thai basil leaves
A sprinkling of chopped lemongrass

One cup Jasmine rice (cook according to directions on bag)

Heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil in oven-proof pan over medium heat. Add the curry powder and half the slivered ginger. Cook for about 30 seconds. Add the meat, browning on all sides. Stir in curry paste and cook for a minute. Add coconut milk, vegetable broth, fish sauce, sugar, and lime juice. Stir in cumin, cayenne pepper, and coriander (and the lime and basil leaves and lemongrass). Bring to a slight boil. Remove from heat, cover, and place in 180°–200° oven for 1½ hours, stirring every 30 minutes.

While the meat is cooking, slice onions, peppers, and carrots into ¼-inch-thick strips about 3 inches long. Sauté in remaining olive oil over medium-low heat with the rest of the ginger until soft. Add the vegetable sticks and snap peas to the meat mixture 30 minutes prior to removing from oven, until the meat is tender. Correct seasonings to taste. Fish sauce is salty, so don't be surprised if you don't need to add salt.

Serve over rice. Serves 4.

Sides and Dessert

Try a Thai-styled salad with mango, papaya, and red onion julienne slices topped with a dressing of equal parts of white vinegar and sugar, a dash of lemon or lime juice, and a very light sprinkling of cayenne pepper. For dessert, slice a couple of bananas lengthwise and pan fry in a tablespoon of butter over medium-high heat. Drizzle with honey and serve with a good vanilla ice cream.

Suggested wine pairings include Gewurtzraminer or Riesling or a light red such as a Pinot Noir or a Spanish Rioja. Avoid wines with a lot of oak and tannins.

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- Children in the picture must fall into one of the following age categories when the picture is taken: 1–5 or 6–10.
- Photos should not be more than one year old and must be taken in Virginia. Only one photo submission per child.
- Submit photo on photograph quality paper. No CD's accepted. Photos should not exceed 4" X 6".
- Attach a piece of paper to back of photo and include: name, age, address, phone number, and fishing location. **Please do not write on the back of the photographs.**
- Children in a boat must be wearing a lifejacket, properly buckled or zipped.
- **A Contest Release Form (PDF) must be submitted along with the photograph.** Go to www.HuntFishVA.com for release form and complete contest details.
- Photos must be postmarked on or before June 16, 2012.
- Send entry to 2012 Kids 'n Fishing Photo Contest, VDGIF, P.O.Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.
- Judging will take place in July and winners will be posted on the DGIF website.